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Berlin prize-winner
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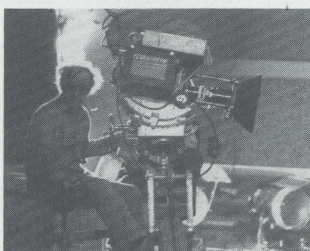
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IN THE PICTURE

The Olivier Lear

'No wonder he's all right,' they would say, 'he's just himself'

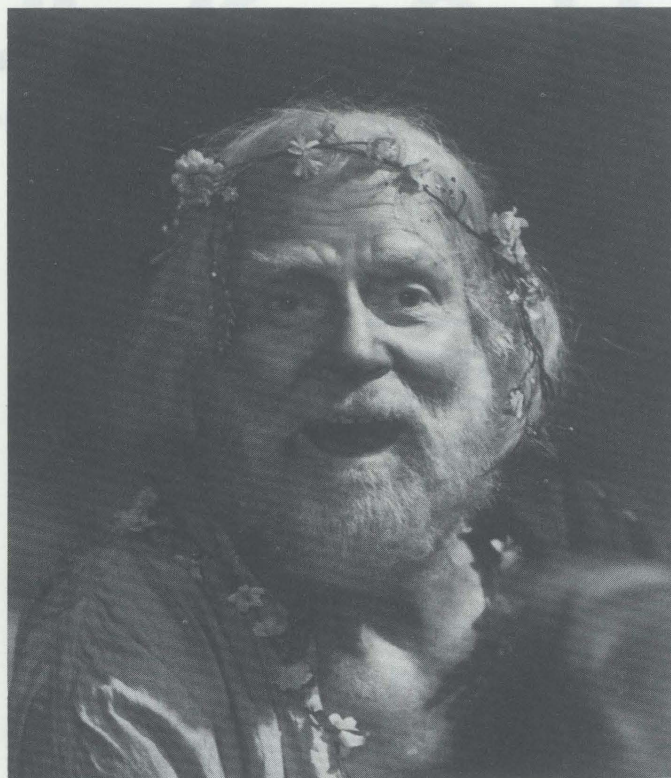
In the plush suites of American TV moguls, serried monitors wink at the visitor with a rude succession of clips from current packaged shows. But in the plain, functional office of David Plowright, head of Granada TV in Manchester, a single monitor relays scenes actually being rehearsed or shot in the studios several storeys below. As he holds forth on the solid virtues of British television, Mr Plowright can thus keep one eye cocked on Jeremy Kemp and Diana Rigg running through part of the *King Lear* that may yet bring Granada more kudos than *Brideshead Revisited* did a year or so back.

David Plowright finds an enjoyable logic in shooting the week's next episode of *Coronation Street* on a stage adjacent to that dominated by the *Olivier Lear*. He is proud of the serial's enduring popularity, and delighted at the freedom it gives Granada to tackle such peaks as Shakespeare's most obdurate tragedy, not forgetting the lavish adaptation of Paul Scott's Indian tetralogy, *The Jewel in the Crown*.

Why, one asks, when a majority of American TV amounts to what even Fred Silverman concedes is 'good trash', does its British equivalent remain so superior, and in the commercial sector too? 'There's not so much competition for advertising revenue,' responds David Plowright. 'There are only two channels carrying ads, and here in the northwest someone wishing to advertise on TV must choose Granada; there is no alternative. While one does not want to take advantage of that, it does make a public service broadcasting system that much easier to run, in that you are not constantly looking for ratings, not dominated by audience size for everything you do. We can take more risks.'

Quite fortuitously, Mr Plowright happens to be brother-in-law to Lord Olivier, and had worked with him on a series of dramas for Granada TV during the mid-70s, among them *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, *Come Back, Little Sheba* and *The Collection*. But *Lear* remained a dream until, at a family gathering at Christmas 1981, David Plowright noted 'a stubble of beard and a gleam in Larry's eye' that indicated the time was ripe.

Olivier has played Lear only once before, at the Old Vic in 1946. 'When you're 39, you're full of spunk and vinegar and the toughness of the role doesn't upset you very much,' he says. 'But the age comes naturally now. If you're 75, which I am, it's



Laurence Olivier as Lear.

damned hard to find roles and Lear—well, it sounds terribly boastful, but there's nothing to it. He's just a selfish, irascible old bastard—so am I. It's a straight part for me. Absolutely straight. My family would agree with that: no wonder he's all right, they would say, he's just himself, he's got just that sort of ridiculous temper, those sulks. Absolutely mad as a hatter sometimes.'

This Granada *Lear* looks very much a collaborative effort. Michael Elliott, the stage director known recently for his brilliant work at Manchester's Royal Exchange, discussed with Olivier and the designer, Roy Stonehouse, an abridged and visually persuasive version of the play that could grip the attention of TV viewers and be mounted within a reasonable budget. AD 800 has been chosen as the focal point from a design point of view, a phase of English history that leaves a costume designer much latitude, as there is no art to contradict his speculations. Tanya Moiseiwitsch has opted for tunics and robes, and everyone loves the surrogate Stonehenge that figures prominently in the production. 'There were sixty henges in England at that time,' declares Olivier. 'They were sacrificial altars, and whether it was human or cat or cow or what, you can only guess, and the luridly romantic side of your nature hopes that it was human—virgins and stuff like that!'

Much of the taping proved arduous. Technicians emptied 900 gallons of water over Olivier in the storm sequence. 'The only trouble,' he recalls, 'was that it

poured down so strongly that I could hardly open my eyes, and in that scene one wants them to blaze, you know.' Olivier, whose health remains frail, was left pretty much in peace during the morning run-throughs. Then, at precisely 2.30 pm on the day of one's visit, he makes a leonine entrance through a pair of rough-hewn gates, to light on Kent imprisoned in the stocks. 'Ha!' he exclaims, 'Mak'st thou this shame thy pastime?' A trim white beard softens his imperious stance; he seems to lean upon the air, mouth agape in piteous concern, before indulging in a smart patter of repartee with Colin Blakely's Kent. When he blows a line, he puts his hand to his head in frustration and apology, compensating on the next take with an altogether new reading. 'I must be a director's notion of hell where TV's concerned,' he tells one later, 'for I cannot do anything the same way twice.'

The cast glitters. Dorothy Tutin as Goneril, Diana Rigg as Regan (replacing Faye Dunaway, who had to opt for Michael Winner's remake of *The Wicked Lady* instead), Anna Calder-Marshall as Cordelia, John Hurt as a mercurial Fool. Now being broadcast over Easter in Britain, and with world distribution to follow, this *Lear* does not suffer from the disadvantage of Olivier's *Othello* in being a mere replica of a stage performance. Instead it is a wholly fresh interpretation of a classic part, closing a circle that began as long ago as 1938, when the young Laurence Olivier made his TV debut as Macbeth.

PETER COWIE

Attendance figures

British cinemas lose another quarter of their audience

At the very end of 1982, *E.T.* and *Gandhi* rode to the rescue of the cinema box-office in the UK. The two heavenly messengers arrived too late, however, to do much good to the 1982 cinema attendance figures. If *Screen International's* forecast proves accurate, the total for the year will be in the region of 60 million. And that would represent a fall of more than 25 per cent in a single year, an acceleration of 1981's already calamitous downward slide.

The official statistics, at the time of writing, take us only up to September. For each of the first nine months of 1982, the weekly average attendances were down, in some cases substantially down, on the same month in 1981, with a corresponding fall in box-office takings and consequent decline in the Eady Levy. In two spectacularly disastrous months, May and June, average attendances fell to less than a million a week; in only two of the nine months, February and August, could they rise above the 1.5 million mark.

America, by contrast, saw an estimated nine per cent audience increase in 1982, and a generally buoyant industry. Why the difference? The video boom in Britain of course has something to do with it, as does the marked tendency in this country for people to stay at home, which has affected theatre attendances and sports. (On the other hand, more people are playing more games, and buying the quite expensive equipment to do so, which would seem to rule out the recession as a total explanation.) British cinemas, it is often suggested, have become shabby and unappealing places compared with newer counter-attractions for family outings like leisure centres—and seem unlikely to get much refurbishment so long as takings are not even keeping pace with inflation. And there is the failure of 1982 to produce a true box-office champion. According to *Screen International*, Arthur took most money at British cinemas, followed by the *Chariots of Fire/Gregory's Girl* double bill, *Porky's*, the Disney duo *The Fox and the Hound* and *Condorman*, *Annie* and *Rocky III*. Little there to conjure with.

By December, of course, *E.T.* and *Gandhi* were dug in, and just before Christmas the top three in the London box-office stakes presented an extraordinary picture: *E.T.* (£128,538 net weekly takings), *Gandhi* (£59,129) *The Draughtsman's Contract* (£12,362). Peter Greenaway's film, running not in the West End but

at the modestly sized Screen on the Hill, held its place in the London Top Ten for nine straight weeks and in its best week took more than £17,000. A tribute to the film and its publicity campaign, but also evidence of the weakness of the market over the holiday period, beyond the big two. A few weeks into 1983, things were looking rather more normal, with seven films in London recording takings above £16,000. BFI Regional Film Theatres, incidentally, have reported a modest increase of approximately three per cent in audiences for September/November 1982 following a 16 per cent fall over the six months from April to September.

On top of all this, the latest trend is a decided decline in television viewing—quite apart from those now notorious Channel 4 programmes which have fallen into black holes below the level of audience measurement. Several television critics have come up with variations on the elegant theory that more choice may actually mean less watching, that national viewing patterns have been broken and with them a kind of compulsion to watch the programmes you expected to talk about next day at work. Others might argue that a television service harassed by economies and creatively rather in the doldrums is simply getting the audience it deserves. Symptomatically, the big turn down came over the 1982 Christmas holiday, when audiences either switched off, or played video games on their sets, or preferred their own stock of video movies to the networks' offerings. A market research survey reported in February that five million people are now reckoned to be watching video each evening—enough to make a sizeable dent in the television viewing figures.

It seems television is taking the

first step on the long downward path of the cinema attendance figures. It is worth noting that public response to a prospect of cable and satellite and non-stop viewing on innumerable channels has so far been guarded to the point of apathy. Excited debate continues among the professionals at the front of the hall, while at the back the audience may just be beginning quietly to tiptoe away.

PENELOPE HOUSTON

Wayne Wang

Chinese structures and American economics

Opening with a rousing Cantonese version of 'Rock Around the Clock' which is all about inflation—the rising cost of tea and rice—Wayne Wang's remarkable, offbeat *Chan Is Missing* neatly combines its concern about what it means to be Chinese-American with the current economic crisis. Praised in these pages by Richard Combs after its appearance at the 1982 London festival as a film that 'answers nothing, but in a way satisfies one's curiosity,' this black and white mystery, about two Oriental cab drivers searching for their missing partner through San Francisco's Chinatown, has done surprisingly well since its US release last fall, especially for an independent feature costing under \$20,000. A strong review from the *New York Times*' Vincent Canby, coupled with careful handling by New Yorker Films, helped to turn the film into something of a commercial sleeper. 'After the first quarterly report, we were already in the black,' Wang cheerfully told me on the phone from San Francisco early this year, adding that the cast and crew members, who had originally been partially paid off in points,

were already just starting to get proceeds for work done in 1980.

The film was shot over ten consecutive weekends that summer. 'The script took a lot of turns,' Wang recalled last spring in New York. 'Originally it was something else that involved a black taxi driver and the whole black community was somewhat involved. And then I dropped out because I didn't feel I really had a grip on it. Then it got real structural; I showed that script to the cast and crew, and they had problems with it. So I started changing the script into something that was more narrative and more linear. That went on for about a year.'

'Actually, that very structural, theoretical idea interested me a lot. I was fascinated by the evolution of the Chinese written word. It has six stages, but I took the four main ones—which, incidentally, also influenced Eisenstein's theory of montage. The first stage is what is called the image: you draw a stylised picture of what you want to express, such as a knife. The second stage is called painting to the situation, so let's say you want simply to deal with the point of the knife: you can't draw that by itself, so you draw a knife with a slash where the point is. The third stage is what's called the meeting of ideas, when you take two different pictures and put them together, like a knife and a heart. If you have a knife in your heart, you need patience, so the concept of patience comes out of that. And the fourth stage is the relationship between picture and sound, where you take the sound of one character and the picture of another character.'

'So the original idea was to base the whole mystery on that structure and evolution. But since this was obviously going to be the first major Chinese-American film done in this country, it seemed a

little selfish for me to do this structural film rather than something that's more accessible to more people. At the same time I don't want to give up some of the things I really want to do with films. So that's why the ending of *Chan Is Missing* moves from something very specific to something that's much more structural and abstract, where there are literally flash frames in the water shots...'

Wang is also interested in exploring the ways that the structure of Chinese painting might apply to cinema, 'for example, shooting from a higher-up perspective, using wide shots more.' A native of Hong Kong and former art student who has spent nearly half his life in the US, he started out about a decade ago with a low-budget American feature made with two friends, Rick Schmidt and Richard R. Richardson, *A Man, a Woman and a Killer*. After several shorts, some TV work in both Hong Kong and the US, and some community work in San Francisco, he made a 45-minute film on an animation table using stills, *New Relationships*, that was also about Chinatown. 'Very much a Godardian, analytical film about images of the Chinese,' he says. *Chan Is Missing* finally took shape after Wang received a \$10,000 AFI production grant on the basis of a script.

Since the success of *Chan*, Wang has been busy preparing two separate murder mysteries, both in 35mm and colour, which he intends to shoot in swift succession this spring. *Who You Know*, a low-budget studio project to be shot in Venice, California, is first on his agenda, based on a script by Henry Bean. 'It's basically about a man who is afraid of his own imagination, and also afraid that he has a tendency to violence against women in a relationship. He's a reporter, and

Wayne Wang's 'Chan Is Missing'.



IN THE PICTURE

he starts writing about this sex murder, and discovers that he's incriminating himself.'

Wang's second project is *Illegal*, 'a thriller that deals with an illegal immigrant and redevelopment in Chinatown,' to be made in San Francisco by his own recently formed CIM Productions, named after the initial letters of *Chan Is Missing*. Once again he will be working with a mainly Asian cast, with actors from China and Hong Kong as well as local talent. He seems understandably eager to stick to the principles of economy which generated *Chan Is Missing*, including the principle of absence pointed to in the title—the yin-and-yang notion whereby what's missing from the screen is just as important as what's there. From this point of view, it would seem that most of Wang's past and present projects adopt the frugal policy of starting with something that already exists. In the case of *Chan*, this is the popular image of the Chinese in American culture as epitomised by Charlie Chan. What this will be (and mean) in *Who You Know* and *Illegal* is open to some conjecture, but the titles already provide telling clues.

JONATHAN ROSENBAUM

An actor's revenge

The Unknown Chaplin; the unknown messenger boy

Elsewhere in this issue Gavin Millar writes about Thames Television's remarkable series, *The Unknown Chaplin*, devised, edited and produced by Kevin Brownlow and David Gill. And no viewer of the programme will need to be reminded of the final treasure that it uncovered, an astonishing seven-minute exhibition of Chaplin's incomparable mimetic gifts intended as the opening sequence of *City Lights* but which he ultimately excised from the definitive *montage*. For the record, however, it involved his obsessive endeavours to dislodge a small piece of wood wedged between the bars of a pavement grating at a busy street corner. Worrying at the thing with his cane, he recalled the androgynous, dandified creature of Buñuel's *Un Chien Andalou* who, in similarly neurotic fashion, toys with a severed hand.

As it happened, being otherwise engaged the evening that particular segment was aired, I recorded it on my video machine. It was courtesy of video, too, that I could screen and re-screen it at my leisure. And as my familiarity with the scene increased, I was conscious of becoming, well, strangely moved. Naturally, I supposed at first that my emotion could be traced to the fact that, without Brownlow and Gill's



The messenger boy who was cut out of 'City Lights'.

archaeological zeal, a brilliant *morceau d'anthologie* might never have seen the light. Then I located its true source.

One of the passers-by to whom Chaplin fleetingly communicates his obsession is an oafish messenger boy. He is visible for maybe sixty seconds, during which time he consumes an orange but mostly just gawks at the dapper, disconcerted Charlie until the latter possessively hustles him away from his fascinating, exasperating stump of wood. In that brief span of exposure, however, the actor manages to convey an impression of cretinism so indelible, and so convulsively funny, as to haunt one's sleep. And he, I realised, was what had affected me. Because Chaplin, rightly or wrongly, edited the sequence out of *City Lights*, this unknown young man has been defrauded of his place in film history. Not that he can be said to have given a 'performance', exactly. Yet faces, as we are aware, constitute the cinema's most tangible asset; and, notably in one startling close-up, his was the kind of face—like that of the nanny whose pince-nez was shattered on the Odessa Steps in *Potemkin* or La Saraghina, the over-liberally endowed prostitute of *8½*—that deserved to figure in its gallery of unforgettable icons. Under more auspicious circumstances, it might have peered out from the cover of a movie annual or been parodied by Richard Williams in one of his animated *Pink Panther* credit-title extravaganzas.

To Brownlow and Gill must go the honour of having rescued the face from oblivion. But if you know who that young man was; better still, if you know him to be alive today; and, best of all, if you are he, write to SIGHT AND SOUND so that we may salvage, for grateful posterity, the name on the cutting-room floor.

GILBERT ADAIR

Fellini's ship sails on

Opera singers, an ocean liner and an appointment with catastrophe

E la Nave Va ('And the Ship Sails On') will be Federico Fellini's first film for three years. He began shooting in Rome last November, after numerous delays caused by the sudden boom of films being made at Cinecittà (including Zeffirelli's *La Traviata*, with Teresa Stratas and Plácido Domingo, Sergio Leone's *History of America*, Jean-Jacques Beineix's *La Lune dans le Caniveau*, with Nastassia Kinski and Gérard Depardieu, and Marco Ferreri's *Storia di Pia*, with Hanna Schygulla and Marcello Mastroianni). Fellini's film is set on an ocean liner, the interiors of which have been recreated at Cinecittà, while the Bay of Naples as it was at the beginning of the century has been specially built in Tibertina.

With a budget of \$8 million, the film is being co-produced by the Italian TV network RAI (30 per cent), Gaumont (30 per cent), Franco Cristaldi's Vides (20 per cent) and Aldo Nemmi's SIM (20 per cent). Fellini has assembled a cast of 126 actors from the English and Italian theatre, and the protagonist-narrator, an ageing journalist, is played by Freddie Jones. 'I haven't chosen any stars because the actors have to play journalists, politicians and opera singers who died in previous decades and it seemed disrespectful to represent them with faces that were too easily identifiable.' The film marks the beginning of a collaboration between Fellini and RAI ('It is interesting that a story which is so critical about mass media is being produced by RAI'), based on a screenplay written three years ago by Fellini and Tonino Guerra. It will be shot in colour by Peppino Rotunno and then transferred to black and white: 'In the early days of photography black and white was fine, and in the cinema too, and it seems the most natural, honest and spectacular way to shoot *E la Nave Va*.'

The plot has faint echoes of *Fitzcarraldo*: in the summer of 1914, on the eve of the First World War, the transatlantic liner *Biancamano* sets sail from the Bay of Naples with a group of opera singers, directors, impresarios, aristocrats, politicians, businessmen, adventurers and journalists for the ceremonial funeral of the great soprano Edmea Tetna, whose ashes the assembled company are going to scatter over the sea near her birthplace, the island of Cleo. The characters are introduced by the journalist Orlando. 'The film is also about methods of communi-

cation,' says Fellini. 'A group of sceptical, wary, chattering journalists embark on the ship. It becomes impossible for the passengers to have any personal rapport with reality, and meanwhile reality erupts into chaos. A very childish 16-year-old boy and a sort of retired journalist who is drunk all the time are the only people who experience the trip like a fairy tale. The journalist assumes the responsibility, or lack of responsibility, of narrating his broken appointment with his own conscience, and the appointment he keeps with catastrophe, and tells the story in his own way, fuelled by alcohol, in a kind of stream of consciousness.'

The extravagant frivolity of the situation is disturbed when Orlando discovers a group of thirty bedraggled Serbo-Croat shipwreck victims, who have escaped after killing the Austrian Archduke at Sarajevo and invaded the ship. An obsessive type of party takes place, the stowaways mixing with the passengers in frenetic dancing and singing which lasts until dawn, when the passengers notice that the dark cloud which has been looming on the horizon is in fact an enormous battleship, which sends messages demanding that the fugitives be handed over. The *Biancamano* obtains permission to sail on to the isle of Cleo and carry out the funeral rites, and the captain is about to hand over the stowaways when one of them fires on the battleship, which replies with a salvo. The opera singers begin singing as the liner becomes hidden in an enormous cloud of black smoke and starts to sink. When the smoke clears, we see the sole survivors, the journalist and the boy, being rescued by a seaplane.

'The film is relevant to current events,' Fellini says, 'in that it attempts to transmit the feeling of anguish which arises from an excess of information about the reality that surrounds us, and which in fact creates a wall between people and reality. The indifference of people's attitudes to reality is the heart of the film—an indifference which often gives rise to the hope that something catastrophic will happen in order to provoke some sort of reaction. Which is not to say that the film has an apocalyptic tone—quite the contrary, it is a comic and entertaining story.' Fellini stresses his dislike for the current genre of apocalyptic-disaster-sci-fi-special effects cinema: 'The cinema now doesn't have anything to do with the way films used to be made. Now there's the racket of space invaders, star wars, electronic directors and the Apocalypse. It's all the fault of television, which aims for the maximum effect with the minimum participation.'

Despite the fact that Fellini may be involved in a number of

future telefilms and screenplays for RAI, his attitude to the medium is wary if not sceptical. 'To me television is a piece of furniture, but the enormous television audience is a reality, and it's possible to find a style and imagery which can get across to that audience in a way that is different from the cinema. But I distrust these new technical gadgets. I find a scene painter at Cinecittà far more poetic—he can create suggestions with a paintbrush. This is the stuff that fairy tales are made of, and that's why I am making a film the way films used to be made, with everything handmade and reconstructed, at least 99 per cent of it. If I could get away with it, I wouldn't even use a cine camera.'

TONY MITCHELL

Taiwan

The other Eastern film centre, where more than a thousand movies have been made in four years

To be invited by the Government Information Office of Taiwan to the annual Golden Horse Awards as a producer or a star is one thing. To be welcomed as a critic is quite another. 'And what do you actually do?' said a member of the GIO staff rather anxiously. 'Is it a matter of writing plot synopses?' Taiwan, you may gather, is not stuffed full of aspiring film critics. And it would take only the most cursory examination of Taiwanese cinema to understand why. It is not the most ambitious popular cinema in the world, and those who write about it are generally content to summarise plots or gossip about the stars who perform them. It took nearly a week of a fortnight's stay to convince the GIO that a

Western critic might be genuinely curious about movies made on the island and a little impatient about being led reverently round memorials and museums.

Yet Taiwan, or Free China to its friends, has long been known as a film centre to rival Hong Kong, with over a thousand productions to its credit in the last four years. There is a crisis just now since, though the crowds are still going and there is a flourishing export drive into Chinese communities round the world, the recession is beginning to bite and Hong Kong is now virtually a closed market. Added to that, the very conservative industry is loath to try out new talent or to experiment with new forms. Hong Kong films generally sweep away most of the Golden Horse Awards, and lookalike Taiwan thrillers, encased in gore, tend to do best with young audiences.

But there are chinks of light on the horizon. The family sagas and historical epics that vie with the Hong Kong style thrillers to hog the local market are beginning to have to compete with three other genres—films about the Mainland, movies about student life and social realist documents. Many of these are made by the younger directors, who push as hard as they can against a rigid censorship code (which merely instructs them 'not to give succour to our enemies,' thus covering a multitude of sins).

Recently, a group of bolder spirits managed to persuade the government-backed Central Motion Picture Corporation to finance *In Our Time*, a four-episode feature which shows distinct promise and, perhaps more importantly, did not fail at the box-office. The young directors—Jim Tao, Ed Yang, Roy Kuo and Yi Chang—worked harmoniously together, albeit in different styles,

and are now in the process of deciding whether to do another feature together or to go their own ways. What they certainly plan is to sift any resulting offers and to hand them over to the appropriate talent among them. Then there is Lin Ch'ing-chieh, a former scriptwriter who has now formed his own production company and whose sympathetic *Student Days* was shown at the last London festival. The film, unlike *In Our Time*, was not a box-office success, largely because it was shown at a time when most students were on holiday. But its selection for London was an encouragement in itself, and Lin Ch'ing-chieh, who has made two other student films, looks to the future with some confidence. He knows that sooner or later the clichés of the Taiwan cinema will have to be replaced and that small budgets do not necessarily mean small audiences.

The Golden Horse Awards, however, do not immediately encourage the belief that something is stirring, being a Chinese version of the Oscar ceremonies which strenuously propagate the virtues of show-biz over art. At times during last year's marathon art did triumph, notably when King Hu, invited to present an award, was addressed as 'master' by all and sundry; and when Joan Fontaine, after surviving a rather tattered clip from Hitchcock's *Suspicion*, flung her arms wide on the stage and said, with a voice full of tremulous emotion: 'Thank you for remembering me.' One was not at all sure that everybody did. Charles Bronson was the chief star on view last year, which was rather a different matter, though he was apparently much put out by a reference to his wife as Jill Ulster.

Such ceremonies, which attract a huge television audience in both Taiwan and Hong Kong, are also run by the GIO, which may seem odd to Westerners but is not at all surprising in Taiwan, since the government has a finger in most pies, including the film industry. The argument is that the government has to organise things but waits patiently for the day when it can relinquish its chores into properly competent private hands. Accordingly, Taipei's Film Library, around which those interested in film congregate, takes its orders and its money from the GIO but its ideas from private enterprise. It runs an international festival at the same time as the Golden Horse celebrations and achieves an increasing number of full houses for its annual samplings of world cinema. As at the Indian festivals, the crowds come partly to see uncensored versions of films they might watch substantially cut in ordinary cinemas. But there is also a genuine enthusiasm for good movies—so much so, in fact, that plans are afoot to find or

build a cinema that could show international films all the year round.

The government, as far as a visitor who writes synopses can judge, does not seem averse to the idea but claims it is hard put to it to help financially. Meanwhile, it remains as anxious as ever to encourage foreign film-makers to come to Taiwan and use Chinese talent in the process. But like Mrs Thatcher's Britain, it puts films under the category of trade rather than culture, and those who want to change things will have to do it for themselves. It may take a long time, but one fancies that eventually they will.

DEREK MALCOLM

Mosk

Gene Moskowitz, for many years Variety's man in Paris and friend of everyone on the international film scene, died in December 1982



'Patient has a definite twitch of the left eyelid 24 times per second (16 for amateurs), casts a shadow running from white through a series of greys to black, has technicolor nightmares... can only sit in a darkened room... can digest nothing but celluloid...'—G.M. 1950.

In Gene Moskowitz, the world of cinema has lost a devotee who had almost instinctively managed to reconcile art and industry (in that distinction so dear to Malraux) without resorting to compromise in either direction. On the one hand, a keen awareness that cinema as we know it costs money, that it entails financial and economic limitations which can be transcended with varying degrees of success. On the other, overruling all else, an unbridled love of films, starting with the classic cinema, our heritage, silent film in all its forms, the work of Ford, Buñuel, Lang. Renoir he adored almost without reservation. But also the films of Mizoguchi, Kurosawa, Oshima, Satyajit Ray, Bresson.

In the article quoted above, which he wrote for the Summer 1950 issue of *Sequence*, Gene Moskowitz described an early infatuation with cinema dating from the childhood experience of



Taiwanese high school: 'Student Days'.

IN THE PICTURE

'spending a whole Saturday in the darkness of the mother womb of mystery and movement, only to be dragged yowling into reality.' After World War Two, the GI Bill of Rights sent him to USC in California and then IDHEC in Paris, there to study cinema and plunge into a hopeful ferment of filmmaking. But an independent 35mm project turned into nightmare, and... 'Hah! Being film critic for *Variety*, America's mirror of show "biz", I found myself in the ciné-swim again. Along came the Cannes Film Festival, and it was two weeks of film—film with cocktails, but let's face it, I love it.' He signed off the *Sequence* article, from which this quotation also comes, 'with my pen dipped in the deepest technicolor blue, on this day of February 25th, in the year of our *FORD*, 1950.'

As *Variety*'s accredited Paris correspondent from the early 50s (when the paper had not yet achieved its present worldwide standing) until 1976, Gene Moskowitz very soon became a point of contact for the entire profession, French as well as American. He was the indispensable link connecting the United States to the Cannes festival; he played host to Hollywood stars and directors visiting Paris, all the while reviewing countless films. He knew Zanuck and Mayer, Buñuel and Renoir. It was he who introduced the French producer Serge Silberman to Luis Buñuel; and from that meeting the marvellous films of Buñuel's late French summer were born.

Equally interested in experimental work, Moskowitz was a regular attendant at Jacques Ledoux's festival at Knokke-le-Zoutte. He was a close friend of the editors of *Sequence*, Lindsay Anderson, Gavin Lambert and Karel Reisz. And he was one of the first to attend festivals devoted to the national output of lesser-known film-making countries or to new cinemas, at a time when such were considered to be of secondary importance. A founder member of the Cannes festival's Semaine de la Critique, he was to remain closely in touch, almost to the very end, with all that is independent and original. As for the Cinémathèque Française, for Henri Langlois and Lotte Eisner in particular, it was a famous case of love at first sight.

In many respects, criticism as Gene Moskowitz practised it ran directly counter to prevailing trends, being based on a rigorous analysis of themes, with particular attention to acting. Nods to fashion and the temptation to manipulate played no part in his writing. As a journalist, he knew every cog and every secret movement of a world in which vanity and vainglory so often serve in place of a point of view.

LOUIS MARCORELLES
translated by Tom Milne



St Just (Boguslaw Linda) and Robespierre (Wojciech Pszoniak).

Wajda's Danton

A Polish writer's passion for Robespierre

In what is currently called 'La République des professeurs', Andrzej Wajda's film *Danton* has caused a certain stir. Among the professors who question or defend his view of history, among the Socialist Party who feel that the debate 'Revolution at any price' or 'Etat-Nation', set against a background of falling heads, makes too clear a reference to the party's internal conflicts illustrated at its autumn 1982 conference at Valence, and even among those chauvinists of the French film industry who, while beating their breasts about Poland's plight, rage that the Minister of Culture's virtually personal film fund has helped the financing of this French film made by a Pole.

Behind all the polemic is Wajda's long interest in the play on which he based his film, *The Danton Affair* by Stanislaw Przybyszewska. 'The most fascinating person is really the playwright Stanislaw,' said film director Agnieszka Holland (*Provincial Actors*, *Fever* and *A Lonely Woman*), a co-writer of the screenplay with Boleslaw Michalek, the French writer being Jean-Claude Carrière. Wajda, one day during the filming in Versailles, said: 'I make simple films. I'm interested in individuals, but each time I come up against history.'

Wajda first saw the play in 1967, when it was produced at the Polski Theatre in Wrocław by Jerzy Krasowski, who later produced two other plays by Stanislaw Przybyszewska, 93,

for the Wrocław television, and *Thermidor*, which was originally written in French. In 1975, Wajda directed the play in Warsaw for the inauguration of the Pow-szenchy Theatre. Robespierre was Wojciech Pszoniak, who plays the part masterfully in the film, though the dubbing in French leaves much to be desired.

In *The Danton Affair*, Stanislaw Przybyszewska is concerned with 1794, the year of the Terror. The Committee of Public Safety eliminates the 'Hébertistes', the Paris extremists, and the Moderates, led by Georges Danton, who believes in peace at any price. The duel between two such forceful men as Danton and Robespierre, former friends whose conception of revolution and government become so diametrically opposed, was a perfect subject for this strange young woman.

Stanislaw was born in 1901, the illegitimate daughter of a leading Polish writer, Stanislaw Przybyszewski, who had studied in Berlin and begun writing in German before returning to Poland, where he became one of the leaders of the 'Modernist school'. Her mother was a painter. In 1907, mother and daughter left Poland for Austria. In 1909 they arrived in Paris, where the mother died in 1912. Stanislaw was cared for by her mother's sister, Helena Barlinska, and in 1917 permission was finally granted for her to be known by her father's name. The father whom she had never seen.

In 1920 she went to Poznan to meet her father for the first time. She wrote to her aunt about her bitter disappointment: 'I'd had no other desire but to find him and devote myself to him... but then I met him, met the man...' Not only was Stanislaw horrified by his weak character, his taste for scandal, drinking and drugs, but her stepmother was jealous. Stan-

islaw stayed in Poznan to study philosophy, while working as a teacher. In 1921 her father moved to Danzig. Finding herself alone once again, she gave up her studies and decided to become a writer. She spent some time in Warsaw, became involved with an underground political group, returned to Poznan where she was arrested and spent some months in prison. In 1923 she married a painter, Jan Panienski. They moved to Danzig, where he had a teaching post at the university. Two years later he died of a heart attack while on a visit to Paris.

The couple had lived in a small wooden house in the centre of Danzig. There was open hostility towards the Poles from the German population. Stanislaw continued to live there, earning a meagre living from private tuition. Her troubled childhood, her immense sense of deception at meeting her father, her husband's death, contributed to making her nervously ill. Her father died in 1927. She attended his funeral in Warsaw, the last time she journeyed away from Danzig. Her knowledge of the French Revolution was exceptional, and her passion for Robespierre had grown over the years, making both her father and her husband jealous.

With the publication of the Left-wing historian Albert Mathiez' book *La Révolution Française*, her instinctive dislike of Danton was kindled to rage. Mathiez defended her theory that Danton was a scoundrel next to whom 'L'Incorruptible' could only remain pure. Forgetting all else, she worked day and night on *The Danton Affair*, her aunt providing what financial help she could. On 9 March 1929, having finished the play, she wrote to her aunt: '... I am today even more in love with Robespierre than five years ago. To no other being have I been faithful for so long, whether the person be living or imaginary. Besides, no other person has had such a determining influence on me. Thanks to this man, I have discovered morality, the highest spiritual conception of man.'

In 1931 the play was performed four times at the Grand Theatre in Lwow. It was performed again in 1933 (Pilsudski had taken power in 1926) for an evening to mark the founding of the Association for the Propagation of Theatrical Culture: Robespierre had been transformed into a tough military-minded man on the lines of Pilsudski, and while the officials were perhaps delighted, the critics, both Left and Centre, were furious. The play had to wait until 1967 to be seen again.

On 15 September 1935, Stanislaw died. She was buried in the cemetery for 'the faithless'. In 1945 her tomb was destroyed, and Danzig became Gdansk.

ANNE HEAD



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HDTV

Is high definition television the
next stage for both film-makers
and the broadcasters?

ANTHONY SMITH discusses the
technology and the politics.

We are in Britain, at last, in the middle of a national debate about cable television and how to establish it; we are also being slowly made aware of the potential of an interconnection between cable and satellite. To the futurist these two media are very easily conceptualised. To the policy maker and systems builder they consist of a congerie of mind-bending technological variables, overlaid with ideological prescriptions, overlaid with complicated opportunity choices, overlaid by a timely national desire to get something done quickly. As the debate moves rapidly on, through one acronymised committee after another, through ITAP and Hunt and Buchanan, the whole moving image culture is being reformulated and the future of cinema, videodisc, video cassette, cable and the host of supporting national institutions has been swept into a slow melting pot. On the horizon, however, is a further complicating variable, known as HDTV, High Definition Television, which sits astride all the other issues, and offers the political and technical policy-makers another round of choices and opportunities. HDTV could bring to an end the already blurred distinctions between cinema and television. It could also undermine the long-term security of television as a discrete medium.

HDTV is not a single invention. It arises from a realisation that it is today possible to contemplate the creation of a new and different moving image experience,

another way of creating, at home and in public theatres, a convincing moving image illusion. Should technology and national policy drive towards this goal, we could be preparing for a medium which would bring to the home a device based upon a screen with a 2:1 or 5:3 aspect ratio (compared with the 4:3 of television). Its picture quality would be similar to that of *National Geographic Magazine*. It could be watched from a distance of a few inches without flicker or line separation being detected to the optic nerves. It would have a sound quality equal to a stereo hi-fidelity recorder. Its foldaway screen could be a hundred inches across.

The discussion has become active during the last year because the imminent introduction of direct broadcast satellite in a number of countries suggests to some that this is the moment at which to wipe out the differences between existing systems of line-standards and colour encoding which complicate relations within the world of television. The debate over HDTV brings out all the political, economic and technical divergences which have bedevilled television's early decades. The opportunity which HDTV offers is also that of a real internationalisation; the positions being taken up, however, in Japan and the USA threaten a possible further round of equipment incompatibilities, as the more successful industrial nations are also those most determined to seize the chance to restimulate the

research and manufacturing industries involved. What is more, one key decision may be taken in 1983 at the Regional Administrative Radio Conference of the International Telecommunications Union. (At this meeting the future of the 12 GHz band of frequencies will be decided for the area of North and South America—the last band available for broadcasting for the rest of the century and a band which has been set aside for satellite to earth transmission.)

So many changes have occurred during the last two decades, and so many are promised for the 1980s, that one is apt to forget that the most basic element—the picture we actually see in our homes—has not been subject to any major change in technology since the 1950s. The cathode ray tube displaying images on 625 lines in Europe and 525 lines in Japan and America has become ubiquitous, yet for some time it has been clear that a completely new system of high definition display is much overdue. We are now seeing the development of digital techniques in the production studio and in recording and distribution. Satellites and optical fibres will in due course transmit moving images. Many of the new systems affect film production, visual aids, recorded images and can benefit from the improvements in equipment, but the broadcast signal itself has remained stubbornly unaltered as it reaches our homes, though it is subject to four wittily named deficiencies: 'large-area flicker' (which gets worse the larger the screen size), 'inter-line twitter' (a problem of display contrast), 'line-crawl' (which obliges the viewer to see the picture as if it contained only half the number of lines it actually has) and 'static raster' (which means that the viewer notices the individual lines in a picture). The TV receiver is a little box which we look *into*. It shrivels the pictures. It's like looking at the world through a misty porthole. HDTV is the technologist's notion of a moving picture which would not be thwarted by the technical compromises of yesteryear, over sound quality, picture shape, picture resolution.

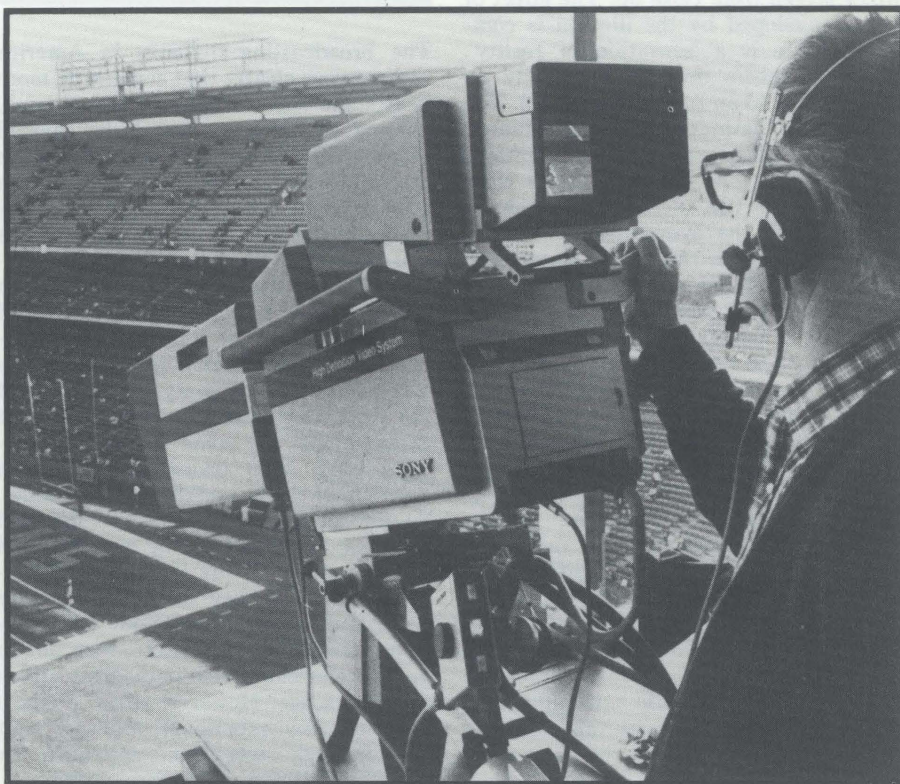
The questions of how many horizontal lines and how many repetitive images are necessary for an acceptable picture have been debated since the moment television was invented. In the 30s the medium suffered from so many technical limitations that a line-standard of a few hundred was as much as could be easily or usefully handled. John Logie Baird had started out with a picture based on thirty lines, and neither the Nipkow disc nor the Baird scanner was capable of reproducing any significant detail. The BBC started its service on 405 lines in 1936 and returned to this after the war.

POLITICS OF PERFECTION

(The Hankey Report of 1945 actually did suggest 1000 lines.) In 1941 the USA decided upon 525 lines and after the war France started a service on 819 lines, which spread to most of the Francophone world. The chaos multiplied with the coming of colour: Europe adopted the PAL and SECAM systems which had the advantage of sharing a common 50 frames per second. America had adopted a different—NTSC—system at a scanning rate of 30. There is an obvious need for better systems all round but, in addition, there is a feeling that if the world were ever to move towards a higher set of standards altogether (which might in the long run involve the scrapping of all existing equipment for producing, transmitting and receiving pictures—a hideous undertaking) then an attempt should be made to force all the systems to converge, at the higher level. There are numerous projects around the world for improving the television image overall; the question is whether there is also in hand a process of unification.

High Definition Television would combine an increased number of scanning lines (to enhance vertical resolution) with wider signal channels (to improve horizontal resolution). Experiments over the last decade have been based on various numbers of lines but, at about the thousand mark, it is noticeable that the picture achieves a quality not dissimilar to 35mm film. The most important recent developments, which have taken place at the research establishment of NHK, Japan's public broadcasting corporation, have shown how a bigger screen with a wider aspect ratio, with hi-fi stereo sound added, can create the 'perfect illusion of reality' which has been sought since television was still a list of mathematical formulae. Now the world happens at this moment to be in the throes of establishing another new medium, direct broadcast satellite television (DBS); and since this, too, involves the establishment of new standards, the distribution of new broadcasting frequencies (the last of which will become available in the present century) and the purchase of new equipment by everyone involved, it would seem an opportune moment—other things being equal—to introduce an agreed set of standards for HDTV simultaneously. However, that is easier to wish for than to achieve, politically as much as technically. Everywhere institutions and government are on heat for DBS (the BBC has been promised by government licences for two channels in 1986), and to hold everything for a further development onwards to HDTV seems to some broadcasters to be essential, to others impossible.

In America the broadcasting industry faces the most appalling problem of transition, should any move towards HDTV become otherwise viable. Its whole system is based upon geographical fragmen-



A CBS cameraman filming football using the high definition video system.

tation (hundreds of local licences) and its entire band of frequencies usable for television was distributed in the 50s, based on a 525 line service with colour on the highly fallible NTSC system (nicknamed 'Never Twice the Same Colour'). Europe in the 60s made the transition to 625 lines fairly smoothly, but even now Britain has to continue to transmit its 405 line service on 2 channels, wasting a tremendous amount of scarce frequencies. When 405 finally disappears in 1986 the 'transition' period will have taken longer than the natural active life of the 405 line method. Changing to HDTV would be ten times as difficult everywhere, and clearly the moment to do it is when the entire audience has, in any case, to acquire new receiving equipment for DBS.

It might be sensible for the television leaders of America to make do with the system they have, upgrading it slightly with some of the new modulation and transmission techniques. One might leave the task to a later generation. But one nagging anxiety refuses to depart. Electronic cinematography (i.e. the use of HDTV for non-broadcast purposes) is today very much on the cards. Hollywood is interested in any way of reducing the cost of making movies and by 1990, many believe, tape/film production houses will emerge using HDTV techniques. Satellite-to-cinema transmission could also easily become economically viable, given that 1500 copies at about \$1500 a time have to be struck for every new released movie; although HDTV projectors are much more

expensive than movie projectors, there is a point along the continuum at which HDTV could become a cheap substitute for film copying and transport and for producing films themselves. (Coppola made a highly publicised experiment on the new Japanese HDTV system a year ago.)

The spread of the HDTV experience through high-grade cable services, or through satellite or by videotape and videodisc, could leave the broadcasting industry of the 90s in a terrible mess. There is no doubt that a wide-screen, hi-fi stereo, high-resolution picture in the home would rip away a valuable segment of the audience for sports, national events, 35mm and 70mm movies and various high quality text services. DBS and cable could quite simply come to replace television. The broadcasting business could take decades to adapt to the new standards if it then had to start from scratch. Better to start worrying now. And to start planning now means, almost certainly, following the lead and accepting the standard of NHK.

The Japanese Broadcasting Corporation started development work in 1970, with a protracted examination of the psychological and physical effects on the viewer of high-definition images on screens with an aspect ratio of 5:3 and even 2:1. The bigger the screen the better the wider aspect ratio works out. It is actually

HIGH DEFINITION TELEVISION

easier and better to look at the big wide HDTV screen from close up. The effect of being enveloped by the illusion is complete: there is a 'sensation of reality'. NHK's engineers decided eventually on 1125 lines, and an aspect ratio of 5:3. The signals for luminance and chrominance are separated instead of being interlaced in the signal. The viewer becomes more interested in the picture and sees an image which the eye and brain cannot differentiate from that of a 35mm slide. NHK also adopted a film frequency of 60 Hz, i.e. the picture is built up 60 times a second rather than 50 as in Europe and this abolishes visible flicker. The HDTV picture contains one million 'pixels', or visual units, four times that of conventional television. At this point the Japanese manufacturers moved in—Ikagami, Matsushita and Sony—and started to produce cameras, monitors, video-recorders to the new standard and tested the result via the YURI satellite, in the 12 GHz band, demonstrating the results to stunned and impressed insider audiences in Los Angeles, New York and Washington. Sony also added a 100-inch HD projector with a wide band tube.

Despite all this activity, all that has been proved so far is that the basic units for HD production can be constructed but many necessary elements in the package still need to be invented: Sony's one-inch recorder is only really an adaptation of its existing model working at double speed. While the prototype cameras are based upon a pick-up tube of fundamentally improved design, the monitors employed are still traditional in conception, no one yet having perfected the large flat-panel display which has long been in research. Telecine equipment able to render 35mm film on 1100 lines is still at the laboratory stage, but the system which NHK is working on is capable of reversing the telecine concept and converting high definition video to film by electronic means (simultaneously with production, if necessary). NHK's Laser Beam Recording system automatically exposes film to the image being scanned through the camera tube; it works with interleg, with slow stock and fine grain. The video-to-film transfer enables editing to be as rapid as with television production.

One can imagine the public theatre of the future, projecting from tape, perhaps recorded from satellite, or using a print struck from a video master. One possible view of the future—especially if the broadcasters are unable to find a way into HDTV—is of a revived public 'cinema' in which live events are seen at a level of perfect illusion. There is little doubt that HDTV, if it does establish itself, provides an experience as different from colour television as colour television is from black and white and, at the same time, as different from traditional cinema as television is. It combines the instantaneity of television with the full illusion of well projected film.

The broadcasting industry in America realises very clearly that something more is at stake than losing a technical trick, missing out on a novelty. It has moved into a completely new environment since the cable boom finally arrived in the 70s—a boom not in minority programming, or 'narrowcasting', as the idealists had predicted since the Sloan Commission reported back in the late 60s, but in the new mass entertainment material of Showtime and HBO. The television companies are now rapidly losing their lone command of the primary leisure time of the American mass audience. Consumer expectations for home video programming have been transformed both in diversity of choice and quality of product. So far network television has retained the great bulk both of the audience and of the annual billions of advertising revenue. Nor will they lose this, however successful cable, Multi-point Distribution, Satellite Channels, etc, turn out to be, for television offers immediacy and is free of charge. However, HDTV offers a radically new experience, whether sent out through television networks, or received in theatres, on discs or cables.

For a time ordinary television can co-exist with it, but after a decade or two television must incorporate it or be superseded by it. Although, as will be shown, the transitional complications and policy initiatives will be extraordinarily difficult, and the take-up of the new medium is bound to be slow, it combines various factors which could well speed it up in later stages. For, rather than being another invention in a long series of home entertainment devices dating back to the phonograph and the pianola, HDTV is one of the new all-integrating, all-converging technologies. It incorporates cinema and conceivably the newspaper and magazine combined; its one million pixels resolve the shortcomings of television and make perfection of reception possible internationally and continentally (though Europe with few satellite channels and uplinks available is in danger of losing out).

At least, HDTV could secure this victory if international telecommunications politics permit it, if various technological issues can be dealt with satisfactorily, if the economics are right. HDTV's high resolution picture requires a very high bandwidth of at least 30 MHz to package its message: with chrominance and luminance signals separated and with a hi-fi digitised stereo soundtrack added, as well as a wider picture, it seems impossible to jam it all into the 6 MHz required by an ordinary colour picture signal. Some estimates go above 40 MHz. While NHK was simply working on electronic cinematography, its engineers did not have to confront the problem of the sheer shortage of bandwidth. The width could be

achieved by knitting together four or five channels in a cable system, but one must assume that HDTV will arrive with several channels (CBS is proposing three channels of its own), and thus the cable route could only become viable when a large number of subscribers (some millions) are connected to new double 55-104 channel systems which are still in their infancy in America. (Two-thirds of America's present cable systems only have twelve channels or less.) This would not, of course, solve the problems posed by America's system of local over-the-air broadcasting stations; some system would have to be devised to intermix satellite with local terrestrial signals.

Sony's management sees the first uses of HDTV in transmitting printed matter to the home electronically. It is excellent for displaying large slabs of print. Japan, like Britain, has a system of national newspapers, and the enormous cost of twice-daily home delivery (the Japanese tradition is for two editions of each paper, delivered to the home each day) represents a large proportion of newspaper costs. The second stage, Sony expects, is for the development of video HDTV mini-theatres, with cable as the next step. Only in the 1990s will television begin to go 'HD', according to Sony. And then only via DBS, i.e. not locally but nationally, across the footprint of a satellite.

CBS's current proposal to the US Federal Communications Commission is for a set of three services to be beamed down by satellite to its local affiliates and intermingled with the stream of terrestrially transmitted news and entertainment. The local station would then send the programmes out on a signal which could be picked up by HDTV homes and 'steam-television' homes combined (rather like the 405 and 625 line system in Britain). CBS has not yet explained what frequencies are to be needed at the terrestrial level, nor how the HDTV signal is to be made compatible with the ordinary one. For if NHK's 1125 line system does in fact become a kind of norm or *de facto* standard, then broadcast compatibility with a 525 line television system could well be permanently precluded. If the American broadcasters could develop a system on, say, 1050 lines (exactly double the 525 line system) then a number of technical methods do exist (in theory, at present). If there should be no compatibility between HDTV and NTSC, changeover will be very slow—imagine how it would have been if colour and black and white had not been compatible on the same receiver. This looming mud-dle is one reason why American television is beginning to take an active interest in NHK's experiments to forestall 1125 lines becoming by accident an international standard, like the narrow gauge railway in Stephenson's backyard.

Not to have an international standard for HDTV is to condemn the medium and the world to untold complexities, delay

and expense, probably for a generation. One suggested path ahead is for the organised chaos of a double standard—one very high one for non-broadcast electronic cinematography and the other for domestic HDTV, not wide-screen, fewer lines, not such high definition. This domestic HDTV would really just be an improved and refined version of the existing NTSC colour coding systems, using 'smart' receivers incorporating micro-processors which will eliminate drifting signals and constantly adjust the circuits. The quality of US television could be improved simply by the industry making up its mind to incorporate into sets every new device now available. Put them all together and you're heading for a picture which, for a time, would be a satisfactory substitute for HDTV.

One proposed scheme called Imagevision uses 655 lines and various pieces of German equipment, transmitting the chrominance and sound signals separately, no longer interleaving them with the luminance signal. The result is close to 35mm film, but uses only 10 MHz of bandwidth. It is an attempt to make the best of existing technology, similar to the MAC (Multiplexed Analogue Component) system which Britain's IBA wants to use for satellite broadcasting and for big screen transmissions a decade from now; similar also to the system the BBC wants to use (which is incompatible with the IBA's). Imagevision is a *pis aller*, but it is practical. It still entails a complete renewal of receiver equipment but its demand for frequency space is modest.

It would be possible to wait a little and perfect a digitised system for HDTV which would have the advantage of easy downward convertibility to other standards while offering easy transmission characteristics. It would not however solve the bandwidth problem. If the whole development were to be allowed to hang fire until methods are devised to compress HDTV signals into a normal (6 MHz) bandwidth, it would take probably a decade, though engineers in many places are working on it. Meanwhile, RARC '83 is upon us, and if the Americas allocate the 12 GHz band to normal broadcast systems then HDTV will be restricted to the non-broadcast modes for a very long time to come, with all that that might imply for (American) television.

In looking at the various institutional positions taken up in Britain, one may now begin to fear that some error may occur through the haste with which cable and satellite are currently being urged on. The ITAP Report, which still forms the basis of government policy, modified by the later Hunt Report, recommended that domestic cable connections be permitted even with only 30-40 MHz of bandwidth. The excuse was the extreme urgency of moving ahead, of being first

in the apparent race among nations towards cabledom. This would be just sufficient to feed a single HDTV signal into the home—should cable be the chosen route for this medium in Britain. The two broadcasting institutions are planning to upgrade the receivable picture, but without increasing the number of lines or widening the screen. That would happen in the era of satellite, from 1986 onwards, and would not put any great pressure on the bandwidth made available to Britain at the European RARC of 1977. The problem of HDTV, not addressed by any Committee outside the two broadcasting authorities, has not really been confronted. Policy makers at a national level have not been tempted to get their minds around the problem, to address the further level of complexity which it places on the whole issue of cable and satellite. It's really not enough to accept the BBC or IBA engineers' view as a national policy.

It is incumbent upon the writer of any article of this kind to give his own prediction of how the various ifs and buts will be resolved, if only as a kind of penance for troubling the reader thus far. This writer's guess is that America will, indeed, go for 'flexible allocation' of the 12 GHz band at the RARC meeting and will thus succeed in securing the basis for experiments with broadcast HDTV. Meanwhile the experiments with electronic cinematography in Hollywood and elsewhere will proceed rather more urgently and with useful results. HDTV will thus be established. The Europeans will gradually upgrade their television picture, unable to inaugurate HDTV in broadcast mode, having already given away, nation by nation, the available bandwidth in the thin slices required by conventional (though improved) TV.

Cinema will begin, a decade from now, to benefit from this much cheaper way of distributing wide screen films and will, in my view, derive great advantage from it, as will sports promoters and other organisers of great public events. American television will lose this trick, I think, and suffer a considerable blow. The coming of HDTV in the late 1980s and 1990s will be another in that series of technical innovations which are slowly undermining the long impregnable hegemony of television. A regulated medium is giving way to a series of fundamentally unregulated media. The doctrines of balance, or (as the Americans call it) fairness, the commitments to news and education and 'decency', must all gradually evaporate—as the result of the whole shift from over-the-air to 'narrowcast' or to satellite borne services. HDTV is another aspect of a cultural as much as a technological change which is taking place as the century of mass entertainment draws to a close. The mass media are subsiding, with all their public sector back-up. The new media, with their multiplicity and increased psychological grasp of the audience, are quietly moving ahead.

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Mobil

From isolation

Yilmaz Güney, banned from entry into the USA and Britain, recently completed a film in France—the first he has been able to direct himself since 1974. TONY RAYNS spoke to Güney in Paris.

The signs are that Yilmaz Güney is coping with exile as well as he evidently coped with prison. When we met last December, he had just finished shooting his first film as director since *Arkadaş* in 1974. (Like Jancsó, Wajda and Welles, he received a production grant from Jack Lang, Mitterrand's Minister of Culture.) *The Wall* is about a prison, and the rumours that filtered out of the strictly closed set suggest a haunted re-creation of the world that Güney has left behind him: he apparently insisted that the cast and crew be confined to the set from start to finish, and shot some of the resulting social tensions for possible inclusion in the film. Whatever demons this project may serve to exorcise, Güney himself betrays no evidence of stress or lasting scars from his own years in prison. In Paris, naturally enough, he has become the focus for a group of Turkish exiles and émigrés, some of whom are now working with him under pseudonyms. Secrecy and a degree of caution are necessary because there is a continuing risk of attacks from the Turkish right, but the atmosphere in the group seems remarkably calm and purposive.

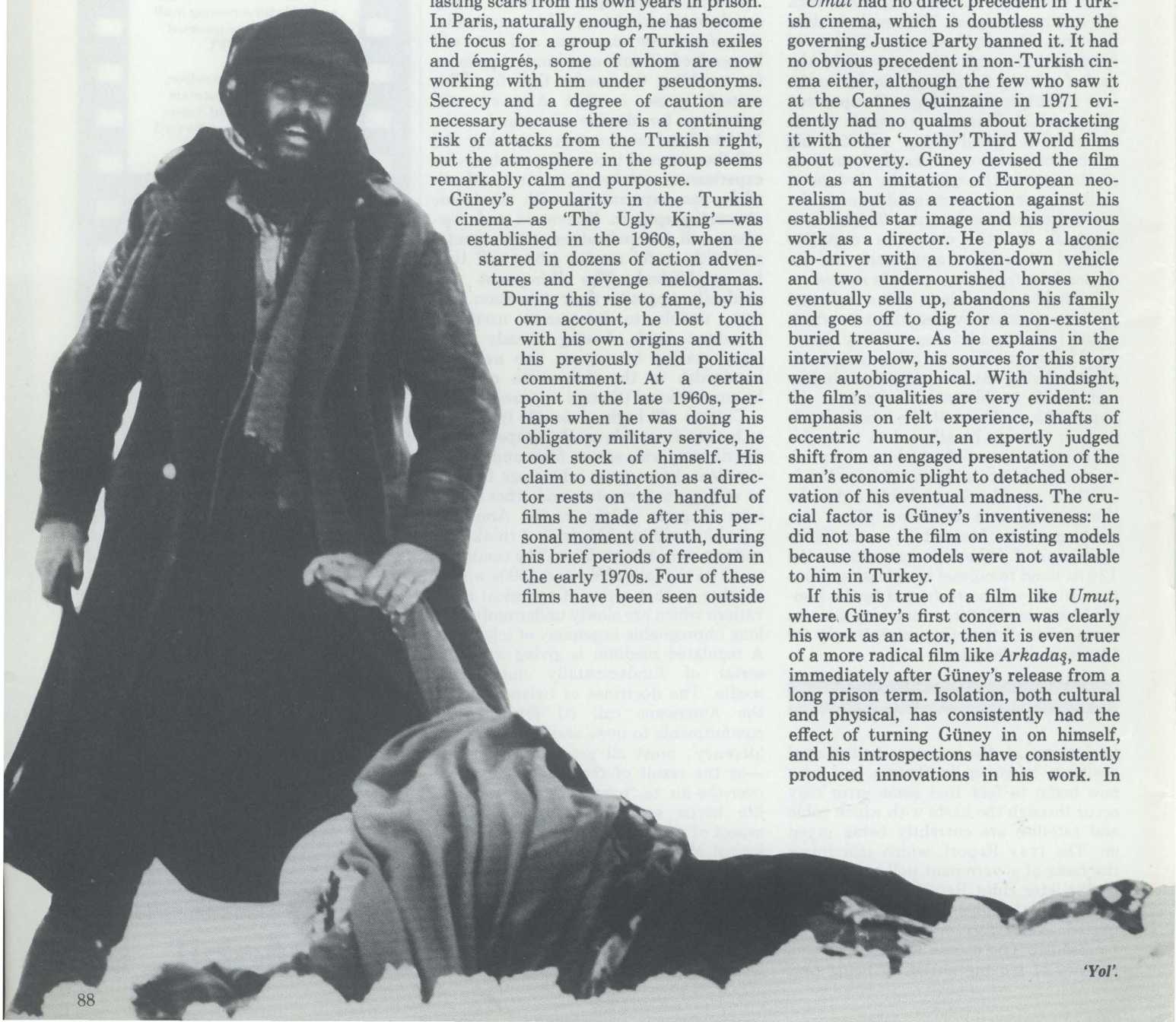
Güney's popularity in the Turkish cinema—as 'The Ugly King'—was established in the 1960s, when he starred in dozens of action adventures and revenge melodramas.

During this rise to fame, by his own account, he lost touch with his own origins and with his previously held political commitment. At a certain point in the late 1960s, perhaps when he was doing his obligatory military service, he took stock of himself. His claim to distinction as a director rests on the handful of films he made after this personal moment of truth, during his brief periods of freedom in the early 1970s. Four of these films have been seen outside

Turkey: *Umut* (Hope, 1970), *Ağit* (Elegy, 1971), *Baba* (The Father, 1971) and *Arkadaş* (The Friend, 1974). Two of Güney's earlier films have also been exported, as have two movies that he scripted and started directing but was prevented from finishing: *Endişe* (Anxiety, 1974), completed by Şerif Gören when Güney was charged with murder one week into shooting, and *Zavallılar* (The Poor Ones), begun by Güney in 1972 and completed by his old mentor Atif Yılmaz in 1975. None of these films, of course, has enjoyed anything like the wide circulation of the three movies that Güney subsequently masterminded from his prison cell: *Sürü* (The Herd), *Düşman* (The Enemy) and now *Yol*.

Umut had no direct precedent in Turkish cinema, which is doubtless why the governing Justice Party banned it. It had no obvious precedent in non-Turkish cinema either, although the few who saw it at the Cannes Quinzaine in 1971 evidently had no qualms about bracketing it with other 'worthy' Third World films about poverty. Güney devised the film not as an imitation of European neo-realism but as a reaction against his established star image and his previous work as a director. He plays a laconic cab-driver with a broken-down vehicle and two undernourished horses who eventually sells up, abandons his family and goes off to dig for a non-existent buried treasure. As he explains in the interview below, his sources for this story were autobiographical. With hindsight, the film's qualities are very evident: an emphasis on felt experience, shafts of eccentric humour, an expertly judged shift from an engaged presentation of the man's economic plight to detached observation of his eventual madness. The crucial factor is Güney's inventiveness: he did not base the film on existing models because those models were not available to him in Turkey.

If this is true of a film like *Umut*, where Güney's first concern was clearly his work as an actor, then it is even truer of a more radical film like *Arkadaş*, made immediately after Güney's release from a long prison term. Isolation, both cultural and physical, has consistently had the effect of turning Güney in on himself, and his introspections have consistently produced innovations in his work. In



Arkadaş, Güney plays a lapsed activist fresh out of jail who turns up at the home of a former friend, a prosperous estate agent living in a resort on the Marmara coast. His arrival awakens all the latent political and sexual tensions in the middle-class family, and the reunion finally drives his friend to suicide. Western commentators have turned to *Teorema* as a point of reference, but the film's tone could hardly be further from Pasolini's quasi-scientific detachment: Güney dramatises the contradictions of his own past as a conflict between the two men, sets it in a world of glossy bourgeois values (complete with tanks rumbling past), and generally does everything possible to polarise and divide his audience. It is a bitterly ironic film, the most politically subversive that Güney has made to date. General Kenan Evren's junta paid it the tribute of banning it in 1980.

As the Chronology alongside demonstrates, there is a close relationship between Güney's work in the 1970s and the twists and turns in Turkish politics. Güney would not have been freed, and *Arkadaş* would not have been made, if the left-of-centre Bülent Ecevit had not been in power in 1973/74. Güney's arrest on the murder charge came only days after the collapse of Ecevit's government, and the reinstallation of the right-wing Demirel as premier. And it was Ecevit's brief return to power in 1978/79 that permitted a short-lived 'thaw' in Turkish cinema: leftist films like Yavuz Özkan's *Maden* (*The Mine*, 1978) and Ömer Kavur's *Yusuf ile Kenan* (*Yusuf and Kenan*, 1979) were made, and Güney was able to produce *Sürü* and *Düşman* from his prison cell.

Yol differs from Güney's two previous prison films in several ways. Far from taking advantage of a political 'thaw', it was made in direct response to the military coup of 12 September 1980. From the start, it was conceived as a film that could not be exhibited in Turkey; apart from anything else, the scenes showing Ömer's return to the village of Birecik feature dialogue and songs in Kurdish, and it has been a punishable offence to speak Kurdish in Turkey since the establishment of the Republic. Güney thus planned his escape at the same time as he wrote the script, and it was part of his intention to edit and dub the film himself once he had left the country. The result is therefore much closer to Güney than either *Sürü* or *Düşman* had been. Both Zeki Ökten and Şerif Gören had tried to follow Güney's instructions as fully as possible when shooting these films as 'surrogate' directors, but Şerif Gören did so on *Yol* in the knowledge that Güney himself would supervise all the post-production stages.

Yilmaz Güney: a Chronology

- 1918 The beginnings of Turkish cinema.
- 1923 (October) Establishment of Turkey as a Republic, under Kemal Atatürk.
- 1924 (March) Abolition of the caliphate; secularisation of public life.
- 1937 Yilmaz Güney born, near Adana, to Kurdish peasant parents. Father a refugee from a vendetta in central Turkey; mother a refugee from the Tsarist armies in ww1.
- 1950 (May) First free General Election elects a Democrat government.
- 1953 Güney works in a film distribution company, one of a series of manual jobs undertaken to pay for his education.
- 1958 Güney enters film industry as protégé of director Atif Yilmaz. First film as co-writer/actor, *Alageyik*, released in 1959.
- 1959 Güney enters Istanbul University to read Economics, but continues to work in films.
- 1960 (27 May) Corrupt government provokes a military coup, led by General Cemal Gürsel. Democrat Party outlawed; social reforms (including recognition of right to strike) instituted.
- 1961 (July) First in a four-year series of coalition governments adopts a written Constitution, the country's fifth.
—Güney's writings of the 1950s, in the book *Trinomial Equations*, are judged 'unconstitutional' (=pro-Communist). Güney is imprisoned, released in 1963.
- 1965 Peak of Güney's career as an actor: he stars in 21 movies, four from his own scripts.
(October) General Election results in Justice Party government under Süleyman Demirel. Emergence of far-right and neo-Islamic groups. Fragmentation of the left.
- 1966 Güney directs his first film: *At Avrat Silah* (*The Horse, the Woman, the Gun*).
—Amid other anti-extremist measures, government witch-hunts leftist writers.



- 1968 Founding of the Güney Film company. Güney writes, produces, directs and stars in *Seyyit Han* (*Bride of the Earth*), then begins two years' compulsory military service.
- 1970 Güney makes *Umut*, which is banned by the Demirel government.
- 1971 (12 March) Military intervention in government: Demirel forced to resign. Thirty months of puppet civilian governments.
—Güney exiled from Istanbul.
- 1972 Güney imprisoned, on a charge of sheltering wanted militants.
- 1973 (October) General Election brings in a coalition government under Bülent Ecevit. Ban on *Umut* lifted.
- 1974 (May) General Amnesty. Güney released, immediately makes *Arkadaş*, and starts shooting *Endişe*. (September) Ecevit's government collapses, to be replaced by a right-wing coalition under Demirel. Güney imprisoned on murder charge.
- 1978 (January) Ecevit returns to head another coalition government, which lasts for 21 months. Güney produces *Sürü* and *Düşman* from his cells in Izmit and İmralli prisons.
- 1980 (12 September) Military coup, led by General Kenan Evren. *Arkadaş*, *Sürü* and *Düşman* banned.
- 1981 (January to May) Filming of *Yol*. (Autumn) Güney escapes from prison, leaves Turkey for Switzerland. He edits *Yol*, re-edits *Düşman*.
- 1982 (May) *Yol* shares Grand Prix at Cannes.

MY CONVERSATION WITH Güney ranged widely over his life, work and attitudes. As much as anything, I hoped to get from him some general sense of the contexts in which he has worked as a film-maker in Turkey.

How did you become involved with the Turkish film industry?

YILMAZ GÜNEY: I was born in 1937, and I began going to the cinema regularly in 1948. My first direct contact with the industry came in 1953, when I took a job in a film distribution company. Five years later, I left distribution and began acting and working on scripts for the director Atif Yilmaz. The 1950s were an important decade in Turkish cinema: the political change in 1950 led to big changes in art, cinema and culture generally. Broadly speaking, Turkish movies up to that time had been dominated by people from the theatre. In the 1950s, directors like Atif Yilmaz and Lütfü Ö. Akad started rejecting theatre actors and using people from the street. They also started choosing subjects from real life, everyday

subjects. It was largely because of those changes that I got drawn into the film industry.

How did the volume of Turkish production compare with the volume of imported films?

By the early 1970s, Turkey's annual production was between 200 and 280 films, and nearly twice that number of films was being imported. The majority of the imports were American movies. Also some from Italy, France and Britain, and a small number of Indian movies. Most of the imports were action movies, along the lines of James Bond. And when a foreign film was particularly successful, Turkish imitations of it would inevitably follow. The number of films that could be called ethnically Turkish was very small. Most movies were copies.

Is that true of many of the films you acted in?

I was always the kind of actor who reacted against that kind of film-making. I acted in a total of 105 movies. Around

15 of them were direct imitations of foreign films: I played the Marlon Brando role in a reworking of *One-Eyed Jacks*, the Jack Palance role in an imitation of *I Died a Thousand Times*, and I starred in several James Bond-type films. I was also in a film called *10 Korkusuz Adam* (*10 Fearless Men*, directed by Tunç Başaran in 1964), which was yet another variation on *Seven Samurai*, inspired by *The Magnificent Seven*. In each case, the basic storyline was copied, and other aspects were changed to make the story 'fit' Turkey. When you're stuck in films like that, the only way you can fight it is by trying to give the audience something different in your performance. Of the other films, perhaps 40 could be called distinctively Turkish—or at least you could say they contain evidence of an attempt to do something better. The other 50 movies were not particularly Turkish—they might equally have been North African, for example—but they were the ones that made me a star in my country.

That background makes it all the more remarkable that you should direct a film like *Umut*...

I felt trapped by the films I was making in the 1960s. Some of them could be said to touch the audience directly, but the commercial performance of the films was very important too. When I was an actor, I tried to work with people for whom the commercial side of things was less important. The central problem is that the people who go to the cinema in Turkey (not to mention the producers and distributors) are conditioned to want a certain kind of movie. You try to do something better, but you don't have the means. For example, the first film I directed for my own company was *Seyyit Han* (*Bride of the Earth*, 1968). I was frightened of going too far: I played the old, familiar Yılmaz Güney, a fighter. Two years later, when I finished my military service, I decided to make a movie without any concessions to that image. That was *Umut*. I still didn't have the money or the means, and so I used my payments for appearing in commercial movies gradually to build up the budget. I finally managed to make the film, but it was banned. The ban made things even harder: no producer was willing to risk financing another film like that. Making *Umut* was a financial disaster for me. And so I had to start from scratch again, acting in commercial movies to build up the money to make *Ağit*.

Why exactly was *Umut* banned? It has no overt political content...

It was classified as a threat to the state. Dangerous to the morals of the people! I think they saw it as a dangerous precedent. If they allowed it, there might be other movies like that. ... It was essentially about my childhood, when my father was a treasure-hunter. I was a carriage driver for a time when I was young, but it was more about my father than about me. Most films were in colour and it was exceptional to make this one in black and white.

You play a bandit in *Ağit*. Did you intend the film as a kind of commentary on your roles of the 1960s?

In a way, yes, but you have to see that film in context. I was arrested in 1971, and released on condition that I would not come into the area of Istanbul. I was sent to an area in South-East Anatolia, and I made the film during the three months I was there. I wanted to show the lives of the smugglers there.

How did your regular audience respond to your depiction of the Turkish bourgeoisie in *Arkadaş*?

Of all the films I directed, *Arkadaş* was the one that generated the most interest. One of my main aims was to show that today's middle class comes from working-class origins and to show the links between social class and attitudes to life. The character I play in the film has a wrong way of thinking: his view of people fails to take into account the conditions in which they live. Change is only possible if your conditions of living change.

When I came out of prison in 1974, my intention was to make a group of between four and six films. I thought of them like the slices of an orange, together making a whole. Each one was to deal with a different social group: the middle class in *Arkadaş*, seasonal farm workers in *Endişe*, and so on. Unfortunately I was sent back to prison before I could fulfil this plan. I managed to shoot only one week of *Endişe*...

Your company produced two films from your scripts soon after your imprisonment

in 1974: *Izin* (*Permission*, directed by Temel Gürsu) and *Bir Gün Mutlaka* (*Certainly One Day*, directed by Bilge Olgaç). Were those films the beginning of your experiment in 'remote control' production?

I did write those scripts, although in the case of *Izin* it's barely meaningful to talk about a script. My partners thought that once the script was written, they could just go off and shoot the movie. They thought the rest was technical. I wasn't consulted about anything; they just took the scripts and filmed them. I had wanted Zeki Ökten to direct *Izin*. It never occurred to my partners that I might want to add anything to the script during the actual shooting. The results were bad, and my partners let the company drop. Three years later, when I decided to make *Sürü*, my old partner came to see me in prison and advised me not to try it—he said the result would be the same as *Izin* and *Bir Gün Mutlaka*. He advised me to do nothing.

Why did you choose Zeki Ökten to direct *Sürü*?

He is one of the best directors in Turkey. We were both assistants to Atif Yılmaz, and so I've known him since I was an actor. I was confident that the way he shot movies and the way I wanted to work would mesh well together. If you give him a good script, and the right working conditions, he will make a good movie.

How did you liaise with Zeki Ökten while planning the film?

The Ecevit government was back in



'Ac Kurtlar' ('Hungry Wolves').

power, and so I was allowed to have visits. Zeki Ökten came to Izmit, and we had long discussions, we went into the project very fully. In a sense, *Sürü* was my first ever script. Previously, as a director, I'd worked from rather sketchy outlines or treatments, and I'd improvised a lot. In this case, since I couldn't direct the film myself, I wrote the most detailed script possible: I specified the composition of individual shots, planned out the editing, filled the margins with notes. But although I did everything I could to make the film my own, I must stress that *Sürü* is finally Zeki Ökten's film. So is *Düşman*. Their success is due to him. If there had been another director, the results would have been very different.

And different again if you had directed them yourself?

Probably worse!

When did you first see *Sürü* and *Düşman*?

I saw the first copy of *Sürü*, without sound, projected on a sheet on a wall in the prison. That enabled me to discuss the montage and the dubbing. It was the same with *Düşman*. I saw the first copy in Imrali, without sound, and then the first cut came back. I wasn't very satisfied with it, and so it went back and forth a few times. We finally decided to recut it in Switzerland. When *Sürü* was released, there were some cases of bombings in the theatres. After that, theatre owners were reluctant to risk showing the film. Similar things happened with *Düşman*. Then, after the 12 September coup, both films were banned completely.

Ismail, the protagonist in *Düşman*, ends up with a greater awareness of his own situation than the members of the family in *Sürü*...

To a limited extent. *Düşman* was a daring step for me in several ways, not least because *Sürü* had found good success throughout Europe. There was obviously the temptation to make another *Sürü*. *Düşman* is not the kind of film that ingratiates itself with audiences.

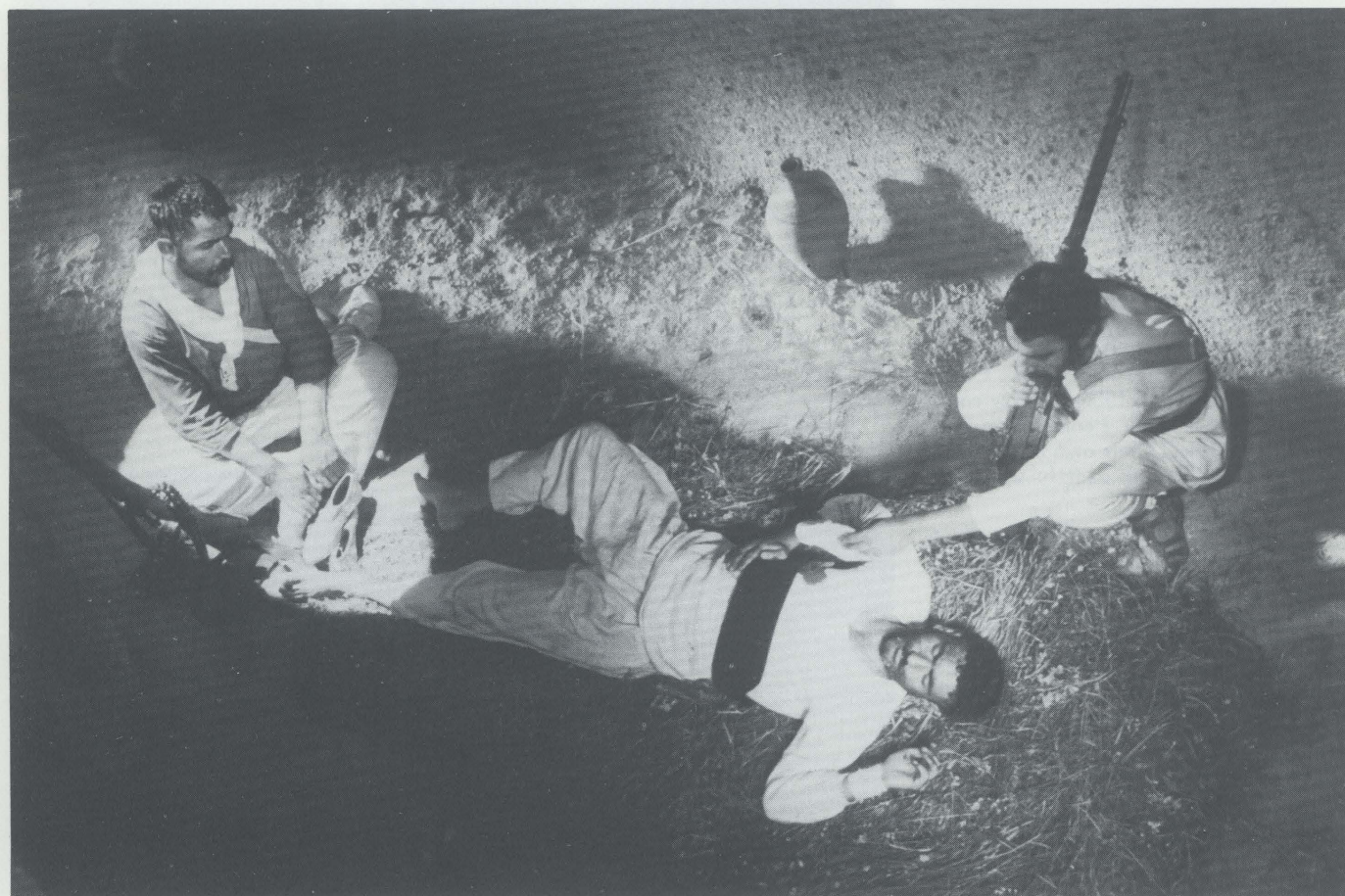
In some ways, Ismail's wife is the most interesting character in *Düşman*. How do you view her decision to leave him?

In *Düşman*, the pressure on the woman comes not from the man but from the circumstances in which she lives. Ismail does not oppress his wife; on the contrary, he respects her and tries to understand her. The wife's decision to leave her husband does not help her to escape the pressures she is under. Her departure is understandable in many ways, but I wanted to show that it would bring her under more pressure, not less.

One thing that's surprised me since I left Turkey is that no one has asked me what I'd do if my own wife left me. Of course, if she had wanted to leave me, she would have done so during all my years in prison. But if one day she does leave me, I will try to find the reasons in myself.

I gather that you originally planned *Yol* as a much longer film, but submitted a very short outline to the authorities for approval?

What matters with the authorities is final approval of the film itself, not the script.



Above, top to bottom: 'Zavallılar' ('The Poor Ones'), 'Umut' ('Hope'), 'Seyyit Han' ('Bride of the Earth'), 'Agit' ('Elegy').

Whatever they say about a script, the film itself has to be approved when it's finished. If you come up with a film that is completely different from the script you submitted, then the commission will accuse you of cheating and refuse to release the movie. In those circumstances, it didn't matter what was in the script of *Yol* submitted to the censor.

When I wrote the actual script, it's true that there were originally eleven main characters. I envisaged a film that might be up to six hours long. We ran short of materials and money, and it couldn't all be shot. Had we been able to do it, we would have shown life throughout the country, poverty and wealth, the bourgeoisie and the workers. None the less, our first cut ran just over three hours. There were some unsatisfactory things in that (some acting that I didn't like, some shots that weren't usable) and so I finally reduced it to five men. We started out with around 15 hours of rushes, and the finished film runs 111 minutes.

I knew that *Yol* wouldn't be shown in Turkey, but I also knew that it *would* be shown outside Turkey. One of the reasons I left my escape so late was that I wanted to be sure the shooting was finished and the rushes were smuggled out.

One of the key elements in *Yol* is the depiction of the Kurdish community. Your own origins were Kurdish. How do you see the situation of the Kurds in present-day Turkey?

The official ideology holds that everyone who lives in Turkey is Turkish. People who say that their origins are different come under immediate pressure. Today, there may be as many as 12 million Kurds in Turkey. If you tell someone that you're Kurdish, in a jokey way, then it's not a big problem. But if you make a public stand on the issue, then you can be imprisoned for it. That has happened to members of parliament who spoke of their own Kurdish origins, or who insisted that the Kurds do exist as a race. One of the charges that I've faced in my time is that of associating with Kurds. Many Kurdish people reach high office, but would never admit their origins or speak Kurdish. For example, Cemal Gürsel [leader of the 1960 military coup] had Kurdish origins. People like that, who deny or reject their own origins, are, of course, conforming exactly with government wishes.

Are there links between Kurdish independence struggles and the broader struggle against the military junta?

The Kurdish struggle, as shown in *Yol*, is probably the most visible face of the resistance. The object of all minority struggles is democracy, to get rid of oppression. If Turkey can achieve a true democracy, then all minorities will have the right to speak up. Personally, I'm for union and integration of the Kurds, but I believe the majority should be free to decide for themselves. The struggle against the junta is widespread in Turkey, but it is necessarily underground. It comes from the bourgeoisie as much as

from the left. The imperialistic interests of American companies weigh more heavily on Turkey today than anything else. Everybody who is against those interests implicitly supports the struggle against the junta.

Is there a feminist movement in Turkey? Your films foreground the situation of peasant and working-class women...

There are groups who discuss women's problems, but there is no general awareness of the issues. In the films, we are trying to put the subject forward as a matter for discussion.

Were there particular difficulties in shooting parts of *Yol* and have your collaborators faced reprisals?

I can't answer your question in detail. First of all, we had the support of the people. If we didn't have that, we couldn't have made *Yol* or *Sürü* or any of them. You can see for yourself from the finished film that there were no difficulties that could not be overcome. Tarik Akan has acted in four movies since *Yol*, and Şerif Gören has directed three. Apart from being questioned, I don't think they've come under any other pressures. The government knows that I was behind it, that I was responsible for everything. Of course, if my colleagues insisted on doing only that kind of film, then the pressures would be quite different...

Then their situation is no different from that of other film-makers who may be

trying to make more engaged films? I'm thinking of directors like Aki Özgentürk.

They are trying to work under the prevailing difficult conditions. There is one thing that it's important to understand about fascism in present-day Turkey: the military authorities care less about people with a history of political activism than about people who make a stand against them now. Some of the people who fought for democracy in the past have today capitulated to the junta. That's a cause for sadness, but it's also a gain, because it shows the people that they cannot rely on leaders. Today, there are about 150,000 people in jail in Turkey. Close to 70,000 of them are there for political reasons. Lawyers, poets, writers, a lot of young people. People who took part in the struggle for selfless reasons. However, I'm not saying that everyone should come out and fight in the open. It is possible to fight effectively underground.

The 12 September coup institutionalised fascism in Turkey. The 1960 coup had generally beneficial effects on many aspects of Turkish life, including the film industry, but the coups of 1971 and 1980 were of a quite different nature. The latest one had the most devastating effect on the arts. For example, there was a singer who was banned from performing because they believed he had had a sex-change operation. On the one hand you have them saying it's a moral outrage to have this guy appear on stage; on the other, you have a policeman guarding



'The Wall': Güney's new film, made in France.

every brothel, because all the whore-houses are controlled and worked by the government itself.

At what point did you begin to think of your own situation in political terms?

I first came into contact with socialism in 1955, and what I learned then was half-way true. Later, as you know, I passed from a very low class into an upper class, and I behaved in a way that contradicted my own origins. I became very disturbed. I was caught up in a tide, and it was an achievement to get myself out of it. What happened was that I tried to stand outside myself, to assess myself objectively. I decided that if I genuinely wanted to do something for the people, to serve them, then I had to do it honestly and do it to the end. I studied Marxism when I was in prison in 1972, and I quickly saw that the Soviets were not at all Marxist. Then, as I studied international socialism, I came to think about the nature of real democracy and to ask myself what we could do in Turkey. My ideas are very clear today, and I believe that I can act in accordance with my ideology. I think I can realise my political aims. Up to now, I've never joined any political group. But I believe that what Turkey needs now is a group that will bring the country real democracy.

And what was your film education?

My school was the cinema: I learned cinema by looking at movies. It happened between the screen and me. Beyond that, I could say that I learned cinema in

prison after 1972, when I was alone and had all the time in the world. I constructed movies, shot them and edited them, but only in my head. When I got behind a camera again, in 1974, I shot *Arkadaş* in 42 days. I taught myself to work fast. I owe that to my theoretical preparation.

Of the 23 years between 1958, when I started acting, and 1981, when I left Turkey, I was in jail for nearly twelve. I was also exiled for a year, and had to do military service for two years, and so I spent nearly 15 years away from the film industry. I've had about one and half years to prove myself as a director since 1970.

You have spent three long terms altogether in prison...

The first time was in 1961, when stories and poems that I'd written in the 1950s were judged to be unconstitutional. The second time was in 1972, when I was charged with sheltering militant students wanted by the government. I was released in the amnesty of May 1974, then arrested again in September, accused of murdering a judge in Yumurtalik. The shape was different each time, but the root was the same.

For the record, what happened on the day the judge was shot?

My crew and I were one week into the filming of *Endişe*, on location in Yumurtalik (a Mediterranean resort near Adana). We were in the restaurant of the motel where we were staying. A local

judge was there, very drunk. The barman didn't want to serve him any more, but I think he was beyond understanding that. An argument flared up between us. The man who was drinking with the judge came into it, and I had a fight with him. During that fight, the judge was shot. The gun was fired by my nephew, but the charge was pinned on me. My nephew confessed to the police, but his testimony was ignored. So was the forensic evidence. My nephew was killed a year after I left Turkey.

What is the film you're working on now?

It's about a prison in Turkey. Many of the prisoners are women and children. What I can say about it is that it's a continuation of my struggle, and a way for me to thank the people who have helped me. The cast is Turkish, Latin American, Algerian, Armenian, French, Kurdish...

Is it conceivable that you could make another film in Turkey by 'remote control'?

I would prefer not to talk about that, because the people in Turkey who might be willing to undertake such a project would find themselves suffering greater oppression. But as a film-maker, I don't want to work in perpetual isolation; I want to share my film-making with other people. I hope that will be seen in the near future. ■

Short sections of this interview appeared (in a different form) in *'Time Out'*. Grateful thanks to Ferit Elabed for translation.



'Yol': Omer, the prisoner from Kurdistan.

'Playtime'.



THE DEATH OF

It was about ten years ago, in late November 1972, that I first took the No 163 bus from Porte de Champerret in Paris to Jacques Tati's office in la Garenne-Colombes, just around the corner from an unassuming street known as Rue de Plaisance. With his assistant Marie-France Siegler—a French-American in her thirties who, like me, hailed from Alabama, and had set up this interview—Tati occupied two offices in a modern building whose suburban neighbourhood bore visible traces of both the contrasting *quartiers* in *Mon Oncle*: the chummy old lower-middle-to-working-class district where an unemployed Hulot lives, and the sterile, newly built upper-to-middle-class subdivision where his 'successful' brother lives.

The modern building, fronted by a glass door with a disc-shaped brass knob, was no less suggestive of *Playtime*, and Tati's office contained other familiar emblems, such as the same synthetic black chairs. In fact, about the period of *Mon Oncle* (1958), his production company had commanded the entire floor; he had restricted himself to two modest rooms only after investing and then losing practically everything he had on *Playtime* (1967), his most expensive film, the masterpiece that wrecked his career. And the previous year, 1971, he had released *Traffic*, an attempt to salvage that career. He was sixty-four when I first met him, although he hadn't made his first film as a director until he was practically forty.

It was easy enough to be liked by Tati. All one had to do was say that *Playtime* was one's favourite film (which was true), that it had actually changed one's way of looking at people and things in cities (also true), and after almost two hours of pleasant interview in English—most of it later published in the May-June 1973 *Film Comment*—he was half-seriously assuring me that if I ever needed a place to stay, I could sleep in his office. (My hair was longer in those days; that and my lack of fluency in French may have led him to assume that I might not have had a place of my own in Paris.) At the same time, it was possible to see more than one side of his mood that afternoon: an hour later, while having a drink with Marie-France in the bistro on the ground floor of the same building, I saw her boss angrily stride in, beet-red, and chasten her in French for not being around when she was needed. He was not an easy man, nor was he having an easy time of it.

Becoming friendly with Marie-France through our shared Alabama backgrounds, approximate ages and enthusiasm for Tati, I wound up writing an English commentary for a 16mm short she had made called *La Dernière Nuit des Halles*. (A one-time mime student whose life had been profoundly affected by *Mon Oncle*, as much through her identification with its social protest as through her fascination with its technique, she shared with Tati a notion of the simple and everyday as a continuous circus, and her tender and sentimental farewell to Paris' fruit and vegetable market was really a film about the circus closing down.) After that we had stayed sporadically in touch, and in early January she called me with the mind-boggling news that Tati was interested in working with me on the script of his next film, a project about television called *Confusion*. And for much of the remainder of that month, on an almost daily basis, I was going out to la Garenne-Colombes to do precisely that.

I was flattered, even awed, but also rather bewildered: apart from my sympathy as a critic and interviewer, what possible use did Tati have for an American writer*—a use, moreover, for which he was willing to pay me? As I had discovered in our interview, he was a completely nonverbal sort; a man whose mime-like habits made his body language and vocal sound effects closer to the sound of his 'voice' than actual speech. He thought with his body, and it wasn't at all clear to me how I could contribute meaningfully to that process.

Understanding was gradual, and came only from the actual practice of our afternoons together. In a way, E. M. Forster's 'How do I know what I mean until I see what I say?' could be translated into the question repeatedly posed by Tati's body language, which was central to his method—namely, 'How do I know what I think until I see what I do?' And in order to see what he did, he needed a spectator, another set of eyes and ears, someone to respond to his gags and improvisations. It's a method many comics follow; where I suspect it differed most for Tati was in his compulsion to reproduce in his body as much of the image and sound as was humanly possible, playing all the characters and props that figured in the action.

A cinematic raconteur, Tati possessed a talent for evoking the formal impact of

a shot with his voice and body which is shared, to my knowledge, only by Kevin Brownlow and Sam Fuller—two other wild men quite capable of leaping about and squawking, if necessary, to illustrate what a particular moment of film might be like. For Brownlow, it is a favourite film moment remembered and savoured (most often through vocal inflections); for Fuller, it is a crazed conceptual notion that his pulp imagination and cheap energy turn into some variant of Godardian aggression. But for Tati—taller, more legato and loping in demeanour—it was always a gesture that came from life, not art. Neither a cinephile nor (by and large) a director for cinephiles, Tati lacked the polemical stance regarding the rest of cinema that characterises Bresson, although he had a similar dislike for professional actors. (In defence of the costly sets of *Playtime*, he would argue, 'They're not more expensive than Sophia Loren'.)

He wasn't an intellectual or someone who read much—although, among film critics, he was unstinting in his praise of Bazin and Sadoul. During one of our first sessions, while I was still trying to figure out why he had hired me, I ventured that, because the principal subject of *Confusion* was television, it might perhaps be worth thinking some about, say, Marshall McLuhan. The suggestion brought blank stares from Tati as well as from Marie-France. After a brief explanation of McLuhan's reputation and influence in the States at the time—so pronounced, I recall, that during my grad school days in the mid-60s, there was an undergraduate course in existentialism at the State University of New York at Stony Brook which used *Understanding Media* as its sole textbook—it quickly became clear that they weren't interested in the slightest.

No less doomed was any extended effort to discuss other people's films. The current favourite of Tati and Marie-France when I was working for them was *Harold and Maude*. At various times, he expressed admiration for Keaton and Kubrick (as well as for Woody Allen's *Bananas*), but never went into any detail.

*It's intriguing to note that in *SIGHT AND SOUND*'s recent Top Ten poll (Autumn 1982), the two critics apart from myself who list *Playtime*, Gilbert Adair and Vincent Canby, are both English-speaking, as are the two others who list *Céline et Julie vont en bateau* (David Thomson and Robin Wood)—another French comedy about the joys and perils of spectatorship.

HULOT

JONATHAN ROSENBAUM

When I suggested at one point that he see Buñuel's *Le Charme Discret de la Bourgeoisie*, he could only muse about who this Buñuel fellow was. Wasn't he the chap who made a film—he forgot the title—strongly influenced by *Jour de Fête*?

The way our work proceeded always depended on his moods, and each afternoon was different. After the first week or so, I was lent a copy of the treatment he had already prepared in French for *Confusion*, chiefly a description of various situations and gags involving Hulot set either in a TV studio or out on various news sites and/or shooting locations. Much of this was satire about the phony clamour of American TV (the bilingual title was as deliberate as the *franglais* of *Playtime* and *Traffic*), which Tati had already spoken about in our interview. 'When you see people on American television, the way they speak and move and wear their clothes (they all have wigs, you can see them)—nothing is real. That's why what they create isn't warm, or natural. When you see all that cream they put in the commercials—I watched from 9 am to 11:30 and I saw only cream, everywhere: cream on the bread, cream on the shoes, cream on the face, cream on the potatoes, cream to be dirty—chocolate cream, that looks like I don't know what. At 12:30 I had an appointment for lunch and I said, "Really, I'm not joking, I can't eat".'

For a while, I used to fantasise ways that Tati could extend his multiple focal points through his uses of TV—such as Hulot repeated countless times on various TV sets in a window, or monitors in a studio. But mainly it was a matter of talking, looking and listening. Some days, when what he called his Slavic side predominated (he had a Russian father called Tatischeff), a cloud of melancholia would seem to descend over him, and it would become hard to work. Sometimes he would take down his large scrapbooks devoted to the production of *Playtime* and linger over photographs of the sets.

Tati always trusted children more than adults. Animals could elicit a lot of attention and respect, too: I recall him performing for somebody's dog in a restaurant for a good ten minutes, evidently more concerned with the dog's responses to his antics than with those of any human onlookers. One time he recounted screening *Playtime* privately for a small group of film industry bigshots, one of whom had to bring along his little girl because he couldn't get a babysitter, a fact for which he apologised profusely. Then, after the film started, she did something truly unforgivable: every time there was a gag, she would giggle, causing her nervous father to turn around and shush her. It was a story recounted, of course, by Tati playing alternately the little girl and her father, oscillating between delight and horror with a regularity suggesting ping pong.

'The birth of the reader must be ran-

somed by the death of the author,' Roland Barthes wrote in the 1960s. 'I think *Playtime* is revolutionary in spite of Tati,' Jacques Rivette said during the same decade. 'The film completely overshadowed the creator.' 'Playtime is nobody,' Tati more instinctively said to me during our interview. Yet, as it became increasingly clear to me, the birth of Tati the director had to be ransomed by the death of Hulot the performer. It was an existential crisis of the first order, and his career never quite recovered from it. People who never heard of Tati loved Hulot, while he personally was sick and tired of Hulot, a character originally invented for only one film, and which the public refused to let him abandon, rather as Conan Doyle's reading public refused to let him dispose of Sherlock Holmes. Hulot remained Tati's bread and butter, but it was this same lunar presence who stood between him and his desire to be a director. Not like Chaplin, who merely regarded direction as the placement of his performance, but quite the reverse: a vision that democratised the holy fool so that he/she occupied every corner of the frame, every character and object and sound, no longer the emperor of a privileged space.

Hulot as star got in the way of all that. This was true even in *Les Vacances de Monsieur Hulot*, where Tati discovered that he could evoke Hulot without his actual presence; the rattle and sputter of his offscreen car sufficed. It is equally the point of all the false Hulots in *Playtime*, who form a sort of chain of being between Hulot himself and all the nondescript bumbleres in the audience. One lookalike drops his umbrella in the background of a shot at Orly, distracting us from the arriving party of female American tourists; another behaves at a gadget exhibit in a boorish manner that gets the real Hulot in trouble; a third presents a going-away gift from Hulot to Barbara, the film's heroine, which Hulot can't deliver himself. The absolute equivalence of real and false Hulots is basic to the film's ethics and aesthetics, which deplore the kinds of space created by stars, whether human or architectural.

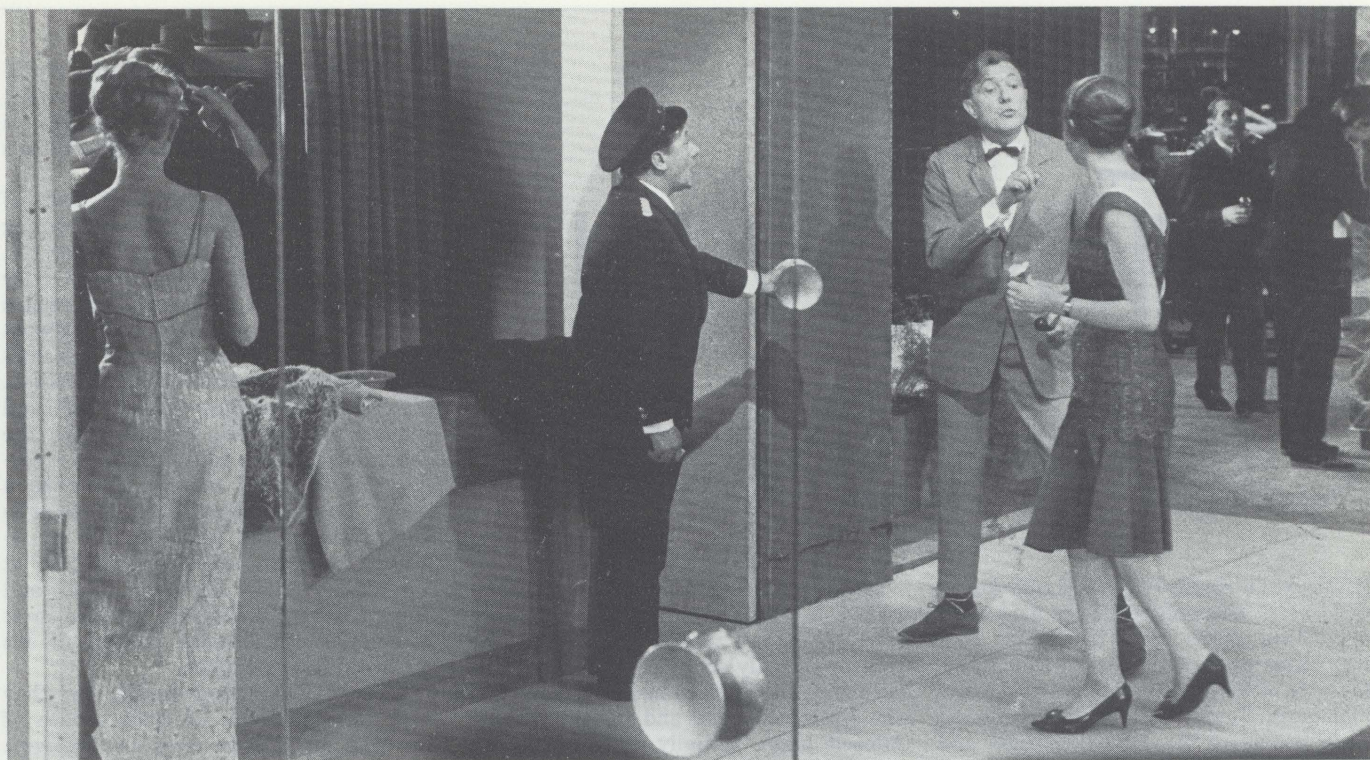
It was a singular experience to accompany Tati to the bistro downstairs for lunch—a recognisable miniature version of the Royal Garden Restaurant in *Playtime*. His behaviour there would seesaw almost dialectically between observation and clowning: the way another customer moved would amuse or delight him and he would duplicate the gesture immediately, with a manic glee that was unnerving if you happened to be the one he was copying. One afternoon, arriving for work, I checked the restaurant for Tati and Marie-France, went upstairs and found the office doors locked, and then returned to the restaurant only to discover that a few feet from my very nose, near the entrance, sat the two of them at a table, hugely diverted by my bemusement, waiting for me to discover them. Becoming part of a Tati gag was inevitable if you hung around him, but it

always became part of a dialectic when the copied version was transmitted back to you. It was the same way, I'm told, that he directed performances in his films: imitate the funny way that someone walked, then ask him or her to imitate his imitation.

The physicality of Tati's comedy is intimately involved with the love and hatred it can elicit from spectators, in part according to the ways that they relate to their own physicality and that of their immediate environments. The world he depicts is a peculiar one consisting of public events viewed from private perspectives (a touching example from *Jour de Fête*: the village postman's horrified look at discovering via a newsreel how mail is delivered in America), a central theme of modernism that actually places Tati in the unexpected company of Joyce and Eisenstein (as well as Duras, Godard, Rivette and Straub/Huillet, among closer contemporaries who revere his work). In the second half of *Playtime*, Tati achieved through intuitive genius a network of polyphonic complexities such as Eisenstein etc arrived at mainly by conscious design.

If the connection sounds far-fetched, think of the intricate trajectories of diverse characters and objects through a single day and city in *Ulysses* and *Playtime*, or the striking anticipation of the latter in *The Glass House*—a favourite unrealised project of Eisenstein's described in some detail in Jay Leyda and Zina Voynow's recent and very beautiful *Eisenstein at Work* (Pantheon Books/The Museum of Modern Art). As Ted Perry usefully summarises in his introduction:

'One of the clearest examples of how polyphony could serve as the generative idea for an entire film occurs in the notes and sketches which Eisenstein made for a never-realised enterprise entitled *The Glass House*. The undertaking drew its inspiration from a number of different sources: the visit to the new glass wonder which was the Berlin Hessler Hotel, some knowledge of Zamaytin's novel entitled *We*, and Frank Lloyd Wright's plans for a glass skyscraper. As early as 1926 and as late as 1947 Eisenstein made notes and sketches for the project. He was fascinated with the visual possibilities of seeing multiple actions in different parts of a glass house where opaque objects, such as rugs, would interrupt the line of sight and serve as compositional devices. Of utmost interest was the possibility that the same shot, or scene, could contain not only an action but also people, on the other side of the glass walls, seeing and reacting to the action. Eisenstein's term for such a film, stereoscopic, referred not only to the three-dimensional quality of the image but also, and more importantly, to the simultaneous interplay of the subjective and the objective. Instead of a shot of an event alternating with a shot of people's reaction, the objective event and the subjective reaction would take place within the same image.



'Playtime': multiple actions in a glass house.

'No wonder Eisenstein could write on February 15, 1928, "On Saturday received *Ulysses*, the Bible of the new cinema" [...]'

The American release of *Playtime*, six years after its completion, occurred around the time I was working for Tati, when he had no control over the shortened 35mm versions being shown. By then, he also had no control over (or revenues from) the widespread distribution of many of his films in 16mm in the US. Apart from knowing that he was bankrupt and that pirated dupes of *Playtime* seemed to be proliferating everywhere, I never had any clear sense of all his financial difficulties. The last time I saw him, on a brief visit to Paris from London in February 1977, he was about to leave for Switzerland to show the original 70mm, 151-minute version of *Playtime*, which I've never seen; he invited me to come along, but my schedule made it impossible. He still owned the only complete 70mm version, but I later heard, rightly or wrongly, that he had had to give that up too when the rights to all his films were auctioned off.

I don't know if he ever understood what hit him; I'm not at all sure that I do, either. Our meetings were discontinued when he became ill, and before our last meeting in '77, I can recall seeing him again only when he showed *Parade* at the London Film Festival in December 1975. A year earlier, at a Paris Left Bank cinema, during my first look at *Parade*, I found myself, to my embarrassment, weeping uncontrollably. It was a circus show he had videotaped in Sweden and transferred to film. A friend at the time who despised Tati had told me it was pathetic, and I felt that it was almost like what seeing Griffith's *The Search* must have been like in 1931—beautiful for what it was, yet excruciating in relation

to what one knew its director wanted to do and was capable of doing.

In retrospect, though, it has grown in importance for me. It has none of the bitterness that intermittently mars *Traffic* (a more compromised work in its inception, because its commercial viability required the star presence of Hulot), and equates spectator and performer more decisively. One can also appreciate the relief with which Tati finally abandons his nemesis here, returning to the pantomimes that initially launched him in the music halls, about which Colette marvelled, 'He has created at the same time the player, the ball and the racket; the boxer and his opponent; the bicycle and its rider. His powers of suggestion are those of a great artist.'

By the time I saw *Parade* again in London, this much was clear to me; it remains to be seen for most other people, who eight years later have still never heard of the film. I remember telling Marie-France how much I liked *Parade*, and the unbridled pleasure that broke out on Tati's face when she reported this to him a few moments later. His bad health was more visible by then, but he was big and powerful for a Frenchman, and he hung on for seven years more. From time to time, one would hear rumours in the press about *Confusion* being reanimated as a project, but the financing never came together. He clearly had reached the end.

Yet the true death of Hulot, as far as I'm concerned, occurred not in late 1982, when Tati died, but in early 1973, at the most fruitful of all our afternoon sessions. If memory serves, it was also the last. Tati was musing about how he'd like to start off *Confusion* with something truly outrageous: have the screen grow dark, for instance, so that kids in the audience would start whistling (he promptly imitated them); make it look as though the

film broke or caught fire or ... or what about killing off Hulot, once and for all? Suddenly Tati got up from his desk—he always thought best on his feet—and started pacing about his little cubicle, blocking out a scene. Yes, they would be transmitting something like a live soap opera or melodrama from a TV studio, and real bullets would accidentally be inserted in a prop gun instead of blanks. Hulot would be a studio technician; or, even better, an innocent bystander who was there for some other reason and stopped to watch this live performance, and when one hammy actor pulls out his pistol to blast another hammy actor, he misses and instead shoots dead an out-of-frame Hulot.

Consternation in the studio; they can't stop the action because this is live, the show must go on. So the melodrama continues while the crew frantically conspires to remove Hulot's corpse without the TV cameras picking it up; meanwhile, the actors have to keep stepping discreetly over his body while continuing their dialogue every time they have to cross the set. It was a brilliant, hilarious improvisation in which at least five interlocking things were occurring at once (including, of course, the TV monitors that showed the oddly strained drama in progress); Tati was playing all of them, including the Hulot corpse, and had me helpless, in stitches.

After a while he calmed down and returned to his chair. 'The only trouble is,' he said, 'I'll never raise the money to make a movie that starts off with a scene like that.' The finality of that made him grow sombre again, and after toying with a few more conventional gag ideas, he sank back into his Slavic gloom and looked out of the window for a while. Then he smiled and said we'd done enough work for the day, and I took the bus back to Paris. ■

THE UNKNOWN CHAPLIN

GAVIN MILLAR

It was while Kevin Brownlow and David Gill were researching their renowned *Hollywood* series for Thames TV that they came upon the material that forms the core of the trilogy *Unknown Chaplin* (Thames). Lady Chaplin had allowed them access to the Chaplin vaults and what they found there went far beyond their expectations. It included complete prints of films they had never heard of, unused scenes from *City Lights* and *Modern Times*, rushes from *The Circus*, camera tests and home movie sequences of famous visitors to the studio. From Raymond Rohauer they collected rushes and out-takes from the Mutual period (1916-17) languishing in vaults all over France. More home movies from 1926 turned up in Kansas City. A truck containing 300,000 feet of excellent nitrate rolled off the Channel ferry at Newhaven in March 1981 to mark the beginning of a delicate and marathon viewing period. The footage was augmented by interviews shot with Lita Grey, Chaplin's second wife, Virginia Cherrill, star of *City Lights*, Georgia Hale, who briefly replaced her, and the famous Kid, Jackie Coogan.

The first, most surprising revelation is that Chaplin not only rehearsed on film, as the programmes tell us, but that he effectively wrote on film too. Assembling related slate numbers from the jumble of material, Brownlow and Gill piece together the progress of each gag, each scene, even each plot. In *The Floorwalker* Chaplin recognises the comic potential of a relatively new device, the escalator, but not only does he endlessly try out different bits of comic business on it until he finds one he likes, he appears to have filmed every experiment. Stock, of course, was relatively cheap. But one mystery remains in the commentary. Brownlow and Gill seem to suggest that Chaplin used the developed footage as a way of judging whether or not the gag, first of all, had potential and, secondly, whether it was honed to perfection. If this is so they were all involved in a long and costly process. This is the more surprising since his first contract at Mutual called for the production of 12 two-reelers in 12 months: a pretty furious pace, which in the event he didn't quite maintain.

But the process is fascinatingly exemplified in *The Cure*, of which the team provides endless rushes of out-takes. The unit apparently accepted that there was no script. All Chaplin had as an idea was the spa resort hotel and its gardens. He himself plays, initially, a bell-hop who gets involved with wheelchairs in the lobby and large persons with bandaged gouty feet. On slate 77a a fountain which has been playing for 76 slates in the courtyard suddenly becomes a well, challengingly let into the main paved approach to the hotel. The very sight of it invites comic anticipation. By slate 84 the bell-hop has turned in his uniform and become a guest himself—but a drunken one. In another take the famous bent cane appears and gets inadvertently stuck in the swing doors. The accident is a happy one: Chaplin keeps it in. At slate 622 the drunk is back in the lobby with not one wheelchair but several, and he is, tipsily and disastrously, directing the traffic of invalids. A few slates later the idea is dropped altogether, but by this time the focus of so much of the good business is round the deliciously dangerous open well. An intriguing late slate, 677 (not in the film itself), shows Charlie in the well, and going down for the third time, with Edna looking on giggling: a possible rejected ending?

The Immigrant provides another strange glimpse of his working methods. It starts with a scene in the Café des Artistes and looks set to be a satire about bohemianism and poverty. Charlie is hunched over a meagre plate of peas and a hunk of bread. There is trouble with the waiter, played by an offhand Henry Bergman. There is a pretty young miss at another table (Edna). But the waiter scene isn't going well. Suddenly Eric Campbell replaces Bergman and gets his enormous bulk and ferocious eyebrows to work on the recalcitrant customer. Charlie is still making eyes at the pretty girl. Bergman is transformed into an artist, and sits at the table. And then, and only then, does the plot thicken. Chaplin shoots a prologue on an immigrant boat deck (a set revealed to be on rollers in the studio). Bergman plays the fat woman and Edna is a girl immigrant who makes friends with Charlie. So *that's* it. When he meets her in the café it isn't

for the first time but the second, separated by a long and sad parting! Naturally, this affects everything they had shot up to that point in the café. Chaplin throws it out and starts again.

The germ of *City Lights* is there of course, in the famous second meeting with the tramp and the blind flower-girl. Time and again the programmes show that ideas worked on in early two-reelers grew into full flower in the later features. It was usually the sentimental developments which received most attention. Chaplin was chafing at Mutual and anxious to separate himself from the Sennett/Keystone cops slapstick tradition. 'Must every comedy end with a chase?' he complained. When he went to First National he had \$1m for an 8-picture contract, and his own labs at the studio. After *Shoulder Arms* and *Sunnyside* he embarked on the most potentially sentimental picture of his career to date: *The Kid*.

A burly Coogan here recalls that they were into the fifth or sixth month of shooting, and still no story had emerged. The First National front office was beginning to chew the end of its cigar and Chaplin played a typically cunning stroke, as he did so often with his audiences: he appealed to their tender hearts. He invited all the First National distributors down to the studio and had Jackie do a turn for them. It's all there on film, with a smiling Charlie out on the front lawn, watching a tiny Jackie singing and doing a soft-shoe shuffle, and behind them, a ship's company of hard-bitten distributors wreathed in indulgent smiles, like an outing of fond grandfathers. Charlie went on shooting.

The Gold Rush was a similar story, as Lita Grey Chaplin relates it. The whole company went off to the frozen north and built an entire Gold Rush village. But location shooting was as uncomfortable, difficult and expensive as it was authentic. They upped stakes and came home to reshoot the whole thing in the studio. Only the impressive shot of the line of hopeful prospectors stretching back down the mountain to invisibility was retained. And it was shot in one day. Lita Grey can't recall how many takes of the boot-eating were done, but she knows that the boots were made of liquorice and that both Charlie and Mack Swain were ill the next day. What is still there is an entire sequence in which Charlie as the chicken is chased outside the hut in the snow, and not just round the table. It was cut.

Like Tati after him, Chaplin continued with the work methods that had suited him as a young man, even after the industry had changed economically. If only Tati had had the financial successes to support his similar indulgences. But the work sheets here reproduced tell an amazing story of idleness on *City Lights*. First, no work on 62 days out of the first 83. Then, no work on 368 days out of 534. Charlie was at home, brooding, unhappy with the way the film was developing. He had cast Virginia Cherrill, a non-actress, as the blind flower-girl. In the most

absorbing and sustained section of programme 2 we watch Chaplin coaxing and coaching her through hundreds of takes, time and again trying to get her to hand him the flower with the desired simplicity and grace. Poor Virginia. A rich socialite, she didn't need the measly \$150 a week that was all her reward for the months of dismaying failure. In her first ever interview here she rather plaintively notes that Chaplin, she thought, didn't like her. She didn't know why. She always liked and admired him. And did she put in some time and effort! Georgia Hale was brought in to replace her and to reshoot. But it didn't work and back came poor Virginia. On slate 4,337 the blind girl gets the money for the operation, and the tramp goes off to prison. It makes the café scene in *The Immigrant* seem like a trifling change of direction.

For all its fascination and for all the brilliant detection work and the technical wizardry of Brownlow, Gill and their team (who must now be the world champions in this field), what else do we learn about the unknown Chaplin? Curiously little, in a sense. The footage certainly demonstrates the infinite capacity of genius for taking pains, but it carries a warning too about infinite indulgence. It shows the master generally right about what he left out. But it shows gags developing more often in a circular, haphazard way, rather than as the result of a deepening, conscious progression of the

insight into character and situation. The gags of simple transformation remain the best: the bread rolls that become dancing feet; the boots that magically metamorphose into *sole véronique*. These are strokes of inspiration that arrive with or without six months fiddling in the wings while the front office burns. These three programmes are invaluable, and well-presented. They stick restrainedly and without philosophical speculations to the evidence the footage itself offers. Perhaps it was expecting too much to want to find in them some more conclusive proof that Chaplin knew what he was working towards, or understood the complex strains of cynicism and sentimentality that were sometimes his inspiration, and sometimes his downfall. ■



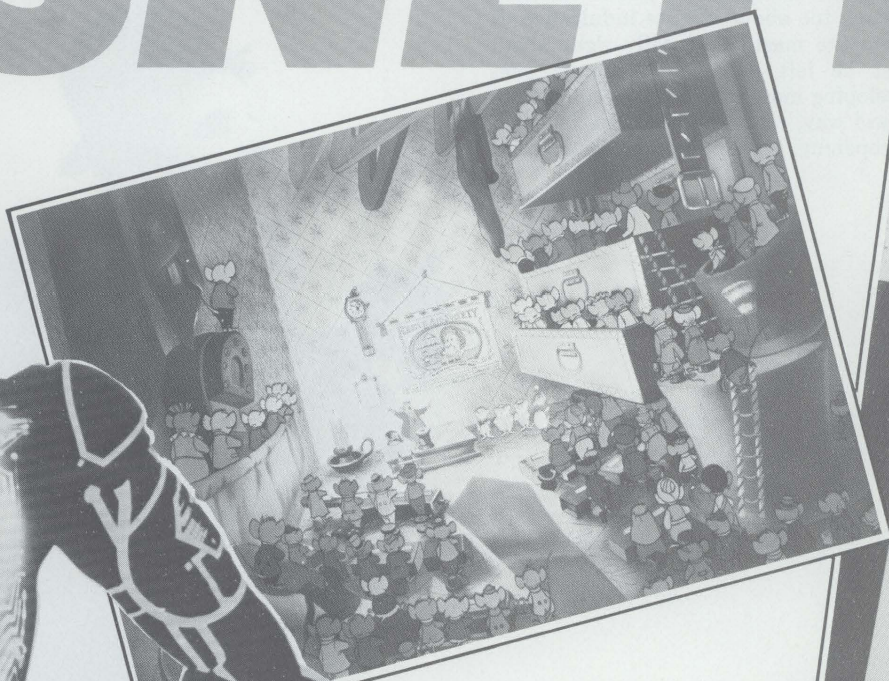
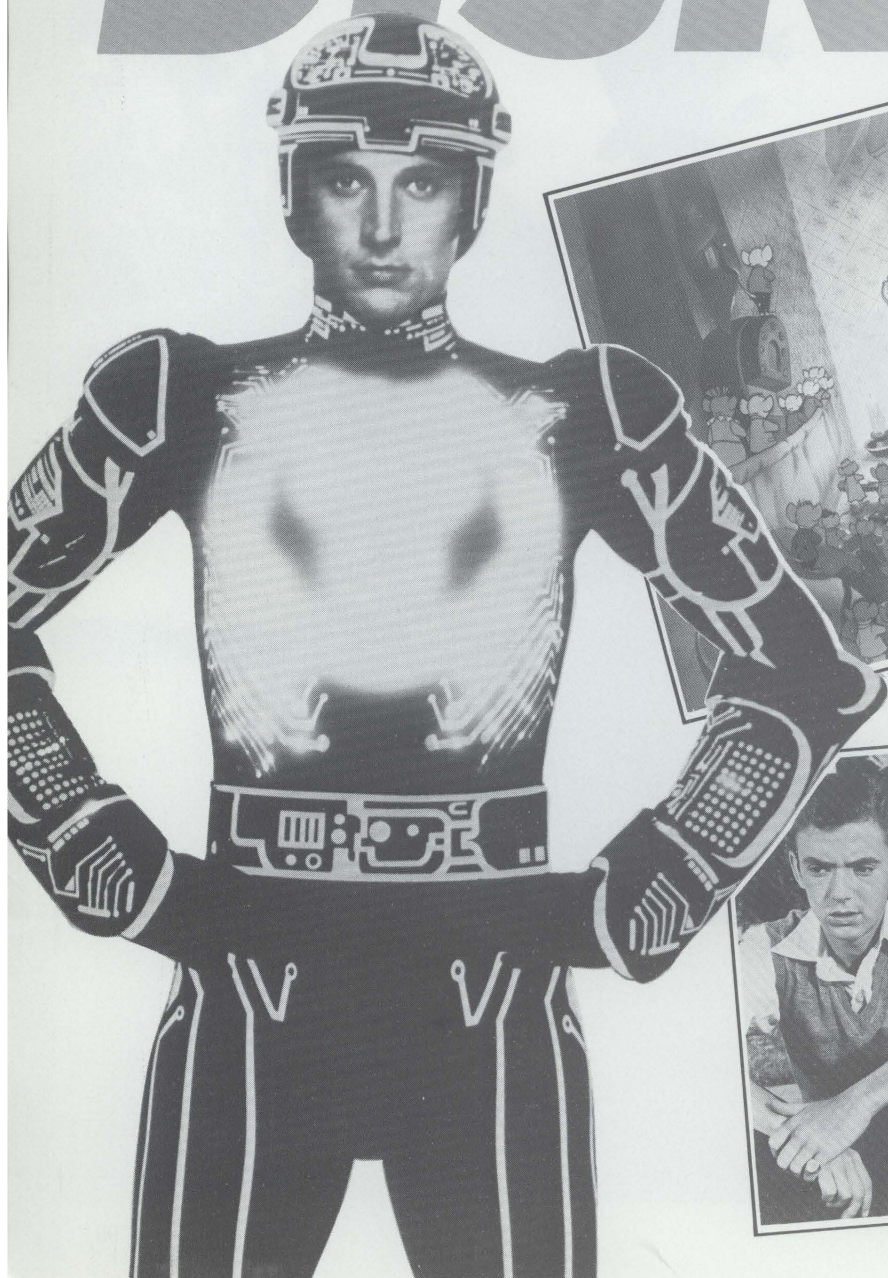
Rehearsing 'City Lights', Chaplin takes Virginia Cherrill's part of the flower-girl. Rollie Totheroh in background.

Jim Seale details the restyling of Disney for the 80s audience.

THE GHOST OF WALT DISNEY still haunts the studio lot he built in Burbank, California, but the avuncular phantom must be troubled these days. For the past five years, most new Disney films have performed none too well at the box office. The only one which could be judged an unqualified commercial success in the United States was the modest animated feature *The Fox and the Hound*, which opened in the summer of 1981 and brought in \$18 million in rentals. However, under a new production chief, Tom Wilhite, aged 30, Disney is at last shedding its Mickey Mouse image and has a schedule of forthcoming productions which could be the envy of other studios. Wilhite was appointed by Ron Miller, Walt Disney's son-in-law, who in June 1982 became president of the entire Disney organisation. The succession had



DISNEY



been expected, but the move is bringing changes faster than outsiders had foreseen. A key indication that the studio had graduated from its old formulas was *Tex*, a low-key story of coming of age in the Midwest. The film was instigated by Wilhite, starred teenage idol Matt Dillon and was the first commercial feature to be directed by Tim Hunter.

Tex has not made its mark on the box office in several months of US release, but it may still prove the most significant Disney film since *Mary Poppins* in 1964. In 1982, Susie Hinton, the bestselling novelist, was among the most sought-after authors in Hollywood. Three of her books had been made into films—two of them by Francis Coppola. She had, however, refused Disney's offer to buy *Tex* because, she said, 'I have a reputation for realism and I didn't want to see *Tex*

Meets the Seven Dwarfs.' She changed her mind after Wilhite convinced her that the 'New Disney' would be true to her book. *Tex* was shown at the 1982 New York Film Festival, the first Disney release to have been screened at an important American festival, and the critics, who had come virtually to ignore Disney's live-action features, were enthusiastic.

Janet Maslin of the *New York Times* declared: 'If the movie does nothing else ... it will forever alter the way moviegoers think about Walt Disney pictures.' Richard Schickel wrote in *Time*: 'For a studio that has been trying to regain its grip on contemporary reality, for audiences that must by this time be jaded by the noisy and moronic farcicality of adolescent life as most movies portray it, *Tex* may prove to be a revelation. At the very least it is an expert entertainment.' The few critics who groused seemed to resent Dillon's good looks more than the film itself. *Tex* did not strain Disney guidelines on sex, nudity or profanity, but it did contain a violent drug transaction which would not have been countenanced by Disney executives a few years ago. It signalled that, not before time, Disney was catching up with its audience.

The Disney Studios' domestic feature film revenue has dropped for four of the past six years, and 1982 brought particularly disappointing news. Feature film profits were down 72 per cent to \$8.4 million, from 1981's modest \$30.5 million. In its statement for the fiscal year 1982, Disney wrote off sizable amounts for three films: \$10.4 million for *Tron*, \$10.5 million for *Night Crossing* and \$6.7 million for *The Watcher in the Woods*. This was particularly galling since these films had been intended to showcase the New Disney. *Tron*, a futuristic adventure that pioneered the use of computer animation, received more publicity in the United States in 1982 than any film except *E.T.* But the production cost \$20 million and, despite the expensive promotion, rentals lagged far behind last summer's superhits such as *E.T.*, *Poltergeist*, *Rocky III* and *An Officer and a Gentleman*.

The studio held an unprecedented publicity junket and cast prestigious names like John Hurt and Jane Alexander for the Cold War thriller *Night Crossing*, but to little avail. *The Watcher in the Woods*, a supernatural thriller, was pulled from an exclusive New York run after two weeks following reviews that derided an ineffectively photographed ending. The studio spent \$800,000 to restore its set in England for a reshoot, but the revised version sank at the box office. Even more telling is that no new Disney release has poked its head into the competitive American Christmas movie season since *The Black Hole* in 1979.

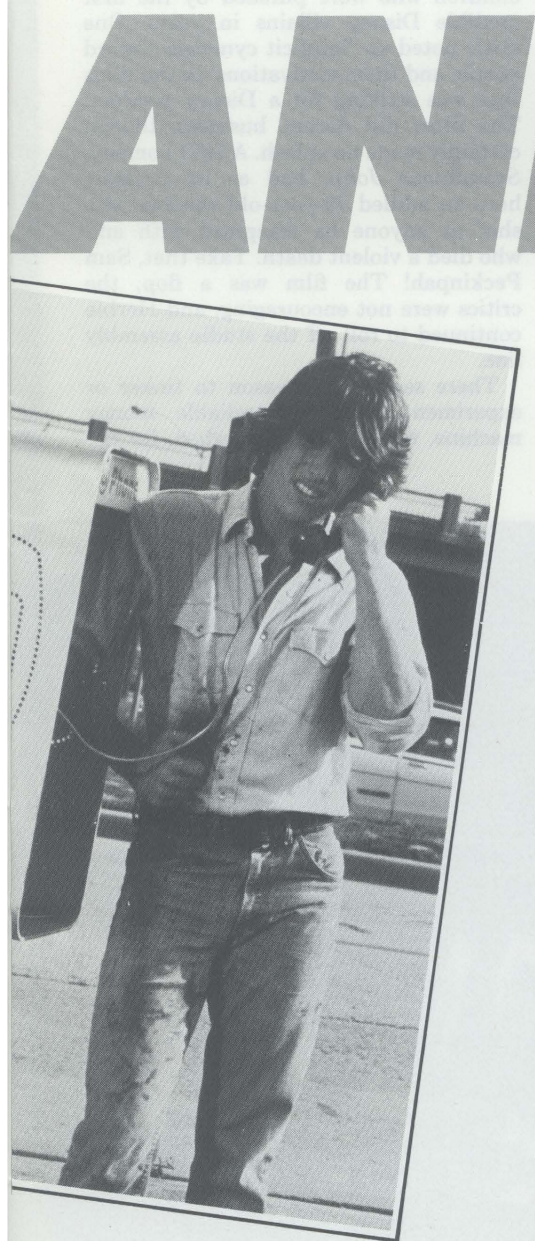
Although the studio had been in trouble before, Disney's problems began in earnest in about 1976 after fifteen years of outstanding success. Interest-

ingly, it may be noted that Disney's fortunes have usually run counter to those of the rest of Hollywood. The commercial and artistic success of *Snow White* in 1937 led Walt Disney to undertake a costly expansion. He built the existing studio lot, and increased his animation staff to more than 1,000 to make the ambitious trio of *Pinocchio* and *Fantasia* (both 1940) and *Bambi* (1942). History has proved these films classics, but on their first release *Pinocchio* and *Fantasia* lost money and *Bambi* was a commercial disappointment. *Dumbo*, made quickly and modestly and released in 1941, provided Disney's only substantial wartime profit. While wartime audiences were attending movies in record numbers, which would peak in 1946, they found Disney's fairy tales not to their taste. The 40s were in many ways lost to the Disney Studios, since it spent the war years chiefly producing Government informational and propaganda films. The rest of Hollywood emerged fat and rich in 1946, but Disney had lost contact with his audience. The studio's postwar releases were mostly lacklustre. In 1950, however, came the commercially successful *Cinderella*. Disney began to grow again, while the other studios began a long, losing war with television.

The watershed years for Disney were 1959 to 1961. The lavishly animated *Sleeping Beauty* lost a lot of money and prompted Disney to abandon his painstakingly florid animation style. *Pollyanna*, on which the studio lavished care, expensive detail and an all-star cast, and *Darby O'Gill and the Little People*, an Irish fantasy many years in development, similarly failed to live up to expectations. But while these expensive films languished, two low-budget black and white comedies were cleaning up and showing Disney the future. *The Shaggy Dog* took \$9 million and became the second highest grossing film of 1959, and *The Absent-Minded Professor* took second place for 1961.

The lesson was clear. Disney would continue to make the expensive movies for Christmas, but with his first live-action comedies he discovered a formula which would continue to be the studio's box office bread and butter long after he was gone. *The Shaggy Dog* and *The Absent-Minded Professor* were gimmick comedies. The first had an American boy-next-door type continually changing into a dog, and the second an eccentric academic discovering a substance that allowed him to fly. Whether it was a boy turning into a dog, a flying professor, a duck that laid golden eggs or a car that shed tears like a human, supernatural powers or transformations would be played out to resounding commercial success in more than twenty comedies over the next two decades.

The new formula was fuelled by the changing age of American movie audiences and Disney's uncanny use of cross advertising. The American baby boom of 1946-53 was giving rise to a nation of children at just about the time when the



Left: 'Tron', Bruce Boxleitner; centre top: 'The Rescuers'; centre bottom: 'The Shaggy Dog'; right: 'Tex', Matt Dillon.

rest of Hollywood was losing interest in the family market. The five to 13-year-old segment grew from 14.7 per cent of the US population in 1950 to 18.2 per cent in 1960. And while other studios fought or ignored television, Disney shrewdly embraced it as a way to finance Disneyland and to publicise his movies. The weekly Sunday night show offered some new programming, but many of the shows were documentaries on the making of coming studio releases. Newspaper comics began serialising each new Disney film several weeks before it opened. By the time the film hit the neighbourhood theatres, a continent of parents had been hounded for weeks for a Saturday trip to the movies.

The death of Walt Disney in 1966 didn't break the studio's triumphant stride a single beat. The in-house producers who had carried out Walt's directives on the set merely huddled into an informal creative committee that now ran the studio. They followed the Master's blueprint for success: two or so low-budget comedies, a special-effects thriller, a warm Americana piece, and an animation feature every two or three years. Don't spend too much on actors or scripts, don't stint on special effects, employ a faceless competent as director.

It worked amazingly well. Disney's successors continued to breathe life into the *Shaggy Dog* formula, most notably with a comedy called *The Love Bug*, about a little Volkswagen called Herbie endowed with human characteristics. It easily surpassed expensive family epics such as

Funny Girl and *Oliver!* to become the top moneymaker of 1969. *Herbie Rides Again* and *Herbie Goes to Monte Carlo* tooted the series along lucratively. The studio trotted out Disney warhorses such as *Snow White* and *Cinderella* each year without the expense of even redesigning the posters. *Song of the South* of 1949 became one of the hits of 1972, collecting \$6 million. The Disney animated classics remain the only old movies in the US which still command first-run ticket prices.

At the beginning of the 70s, every other studio in Hollywood was in the throes of an *Easy Rider*-produced crisis and scrambling to please an increasingly intransigent public. Disney, a world unto itself, rode high above these problems as a thriving relic of the studio system days. Other studios were selling or demolishing their lots. Disney's four big soundstages and standing exteriors weren't large enough for the studio's busy schedule, and its departments were fully staffed with old veterans. It reminded one of MGM under Irving Thalberg.

Except that its Thalberg was dead—or was he? Ron Miller, then an executive producer on the lot, was clearly destined to take over his father-in-law's company. But he seemed to be in no hurry. After all, Walt was still around, in a way. Miller told the *Los Angeles Times* in 1975: 'The feeling is uncanny. You're bending over your work and you feel that at any moment Walt is going to tap you on the shoulder and take you off to see a new idea on a drawing board or a new gadget

we might use.' No one touched the contents of Disney's office from the day he died. Every pencil, every script, every paperweight was left as it was. It seemed less a case of enshrinement than of leaving food in the tomb for Pharaoh to consume in the afterlife. Did they think he was still using it? The office was eventually dismantled and is now preserved intact at Disneyland in Anaheim, California, but Disney's ideas still held sway. Miller made clear in a 1975 interview that 'We're still following his guidelines and philosophy, and I think to a certain extent we gauge everything we do against what he would have wanted.'

Actually, Miller did on occasion depart from strict Disney propriety. He made *Escape to Witch Mountain* in 1974, and then followed it with a 1978 sequel. The films concerned two psychically gifted children who were pursued by the first credible Disney villains in years. One critic noted an 'implicit cynicism toward people and their motivations' in the films that was striking for a Disney product. The films did decent business, though certainly made no splash. A 1971 comedy, *Scandalous John*, had as its unlikely hero an addled 79-year-old rancher who shot at anyone he disagreed with and who died a violent death. Take that, Sam Peckinpah! The film was a flop, the critics were not encouraging, and Herbie continued to roll off the studio assembly line.

There seemed no reason to tinker or experiment with this reliable money machine, not even in 1976 when, for the



Above: 'Something Wicked This Way Comes'; right: shooting 'Never Cry Wolf'.

first time in nine years, Disney's domestic feature film revenue actually declined. It was a slight drop, brought on by disappointing business for the studio's big summer release, *Treasure of Matecumbe*, and Hollywood observers at the time considered it little more than a statistical quirk. But 1977 brought another decline in US receipts, to \$58.7 million, from 1976's \$60.5 million. The animated *Rescuers* and *Herbie Goes to Monte Carlo* did well though unspectacularly in the United States, but the lacklustre performance of *The Shaggy D.A.* puzzled everyone. Revenue rose to \$60 million in 1978, but it became obvious that the old audience wasn't there any more. For one thing, it was growing up. The five to 13-year-old age group dwindled from 18.2 per cent in 1960 to 13.6 per cent in 1980.

The gravy train was slowing down and might stop altogether if measures weren't taken. They were, and the catchword around town was the 'New Disney'. The studio would now make not only films rated 'G' (general audience) under the US ratings code, but also for the first time some 'soft PGs' (mature rated) to which unaccompanied children were admitted. This New Disney meant that the 1977 musical *Pete's Dragon* would have dialogue peppered with terms such as 'puberty' and 'stud fees' and that *Freaky Friday* the same year served up the old gimmick formula with an added measure of trendy feminism. The studio modified its 'get 'em on the way up or on the way down' casting policy and began to hire non-Disneyish actors. Elliott Gould

appeared in the *The Last Flight of Noah's Ark* and in the studio's stab at sophisticated comedy, *The Devil and Max Devlin*. Some of these films, especially *Freaky Friday* with Barbara Harris and Jody Foster, had their virtues, but few could be termed commercially successful and they did nothing to change Disney's image.

Ironically, mainstream film-makers like George Lucas and Steven Spielberg were bringing Hollywood back to the family film. (One critic last summer called *E.T.* the 'best Disney film Disney never made'.) *The Black Hole*, with a \$20 million budget, was the studio's first substantial bid to regain its place at the box office. While the spectacular matte paintings by Peter and Harrison Ellen-shaw made it the most coherently designed of all the space epics, critics and moviegoers recognised instantly the recycled Captain Nemo story. The Christmas 1979 film did good business for about ten days, then dropped precipitously.

Nothing seemed to work for Disney. It made two promising co-productions with Paramount, a musical *Popeye* with Robin Williams, released in 1980, and next year a sword and sorcery fantasy, *Dragon-slayer*. *Popeye* consumed almost \$30 million before director Robert Altman finished it but took only a disappointing \$12 million in US rentals. *Dragon-slayer*, despite superlative effects and good reviews, was a commercial disaster. As if things weren't bad enough, two camps in the studio suffered crises. Disney had been working overtime to rebuild its famed animation staff as the *Snow White* generation began to retire. It had made a good start when Don Bluth, unofficially looked to as the animation unit's future leader, walked out in September 1979 and took with him almost a dozen of the department's brightest young talents. And the Disney television show was cancelled due to poor ratings by the National Broadcasting Company after almost twenty years on the network. The show quickly found a new home on CBS, but in late autumn 1982 was again in ratings difficulties, as were most programmes on the three major US networks.

The brightest spot in Disney Productions remains its performance at the foreign box office, especially Europe. Britain and the Continent has always been an important Disney market, particularly for the animated films, and foreign receipts often made up as much as 50 per cent of the feature film revenue. Yet in 1979 foreign earnings actually pulled substantially ahead of US revenue and have easily surpassed the domestic box office ever since, despite the falling value of European currency against the dollar in the last two years. In 1982 the ratio was \$64.5 million foreign versus \$55.4 million US, but in 1981 stronger foreign currencies made it \$76.2 to \$54.6 million.

The trend actually started in 1974, when the animated *Robin Hood* collected substantially more overseas than at

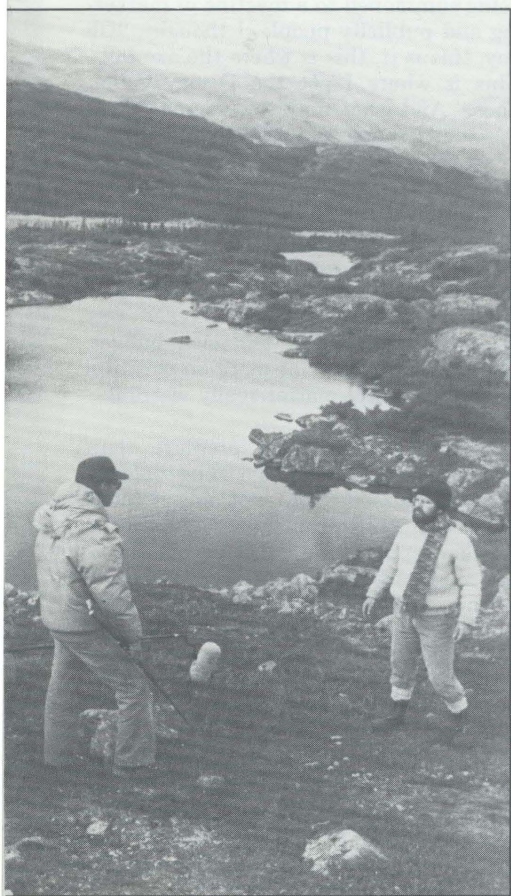
home. But it was *The Rescuers*, released in the summer of 1977 in the US to \$17 million rentals, which became a European blockbuster outdrawing *Star Wars*. *The Rescuers* made \$12 million in West Germany alone in 1978, to become what was then that country's all-time money-maker, and \$6 million in France. The December 1979 reissue of *The Jungle Book* in West Germany topped even the *Rescuers*' record. It collected \$22 million in seven European countries. Since a foreign release usually follows a film's US run by six months or more, the international distribution office has the advantage of learning from the mistakes of Buena Vista, Disney's 29-year-old US distribution arm.

Buena Vista has had perhaps the hardest adjustment of any Disney division. The production office has struggled to come up with films for a new audience; Buena Vista has had to find the new audience. Until the mid-70s, life was easy. Buena Vista was releasing films to a presold public. The movie had already been seen in parts on the TV show and, for many, the comforting Disney label was reason enough to attend. Most Disney films always opened in the same neighbourhood theatres year after year. However, now that the product is changing in hopes of attracting adults as well as children, Buena Vista has had to scramble to get into the 'silk stocking' theatres. It has not been easy. Theatre-owners forget the millions that were made from *Mary Poppins* but remember being burned by both *The Black Hole* and *Tron*.

Wilhite has made no secret of his dissatisfaction with the promotion and distribution of *Tex*. 'They decided that it was a film for teenagers in small towns, and what it's proven to be is a film for 20 to 35-year-olds in cities,' he said. 'I think the film is surviving on its own merits. I also think that Buena Vista will have to change, and it already has to some extent. With *Tex* they have had to try things never tried before, such as selected openings and waiting until certain theatres are available. The idea that has proliferated—and Buena Vista is no more guilty than other distribution companies in this respect—that every film has to open in 1,200 theatres on the same day backed by huge advertising, is kind of silly. There's really no reason why certain pictures can't take a year to play themselves off. Allow a film to find its place.'

The production departments have already changed. Outside artisans such as production designers now work on a per-picture basis, as they have done at other studios for twenty years. Disney is for the first time renting its backlots and soundstages to outside producers. Wilhite's biggest problem in making further changes at the studio is, as he knows, the monumental Disney legacy.

Carroll Ballard was one of the most sought-after directors in Hollywood following the success of his first film *The Black Stallion*. He has been working for Disney on *Never Cry Wolf*, a story shot



in the Arctic about a young scientist's research among wolves. 'Certain elements in the studio resist change,' Ballard said. 'You always get "Well, what would Walt have thought?" That's still very strong. There's another group which says: "Come on, we've got to look at the world as it is now." At present Disney is in-between. One foot is back in 1933, and the other they're trying to set down in the 1980s. They haven't quite got it down on the ground yet.' Outsiders on the lot believe Wilhite wants to try new ideas. They see traditionalists rallying around Card Walker, 67, Disney's Chairman of the Board. Wilhite says only: 'I don't think it's necessarily that specific a division.' Walker was reportedly troubled by the title of *Something Wicked This Way Comes*, and insiders say that he was downright aghast at a sequence with a transvestite in another forthcoming production, *Trenchcoat*. Wilhite admitted there was argument about the *Tex* drug deal, but added that since seeing the film the dissenters had changed their minds.

Timidity is expected to melt as Disney's corporate succession follows its course. Observers expect Wilhite to come even more into his own in the movie division. Miller, his boss, and the man who steadily promoted him up the ladder out of the publicity department, is expected to keep a firm hand on Disney's movies. But now that Miller is president of the entire Disney organisation, he is likely to be increasingly occupied by other matters. These include the futuristic EPCOT section of Disneyworld in Florida, which opened in autumn 1982 and is still evolving, and another large Disney park which is due to open in April 1983 in Tokyo. Walker, who stepped up from the presidency to the chairmanship in June 1982, is expected to retire within a few years.

The studio has come up with a solution to keep the traditionalists and the Young Turks happy: the formation within Disney of Hyperion Pictures, named for the street in Los Angeles where the first company studios were located. Films which don't strain studio tradition will go out under the Disney banner, the ones, as Wilhite put it, 'with a certain edge to them' as Hyperion Productions.

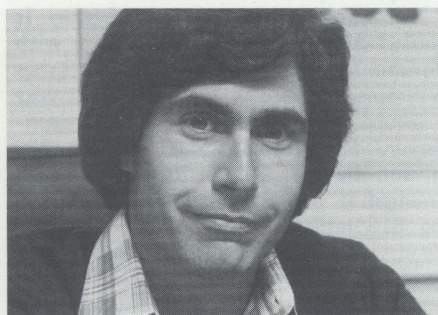
'We're never going to do exploitation, horror films, or sexual or violent films,' Wilhite said. 'But Hyperion will allow us to make films of broader appeal, like maybe *Ordinary People* or *Poltergeist*. In my opinion those were sort of Disney pictures anyway.' Another Hyperion release will be Tim Hunter's second film, *Two Scoops*, a comedy with Bill Murray about the newspaper world. 'It's pretty hard to do today's comedy within the Disney guidelines,' Wilhite said. The Hyperion tag solves another problem: the stigma of the Disney name with many Americans. With *The Devil and Max Devlin* the studio dropped the Disney name from its position at the top of the posters to the fine print at the bottom, and has continued this practice for most of its live-action movies. 'I'm not an

advocate of hiding the Disney name,' Wilhite said. 'On the other hand, I'm not an advocate of necessarily shouting it. I just think it gives people an excuse to say, "Well, I don't want to go see a Disney picture".'

Wilhite believes that *Tron* and *Tex*, though not theatrical hits, have begun to change Disney's saccharine image. 'This



Above: Disney president Ron Miller; below: production chief Tom Wilhite.



stigma has become less. We did a survey recently, and it showed that most people, particularly if they had seen *Tron* or *Tex*, thought that Disney had changed. It's a thing that will take a while for us to overcome. Most of our successful films are general audience pictures anyway and I don't see us being cut off from most subjects.' Despite several years of bad news, the good *Tex* notices have encouraged morale on the lot. Disheartened by the Bluth exodus, the animation shop has regained its enthusiasm. And the animators do not need to remind the Disney brass that the company's far-flung empire was built from their department, since the last two animation features were more profitable than the live-action movies.

In *The Rescuers* (1977), the unit began to return to the painstaking, elaborate style Disney himself began to abandon after *Sleeping Beauty*. A Tolkien-type epic based on Welsh myth, *The Black Cauldron* has been in the works for several years and is expected in 1985. Wilhite has encouraged individual animators to come forward with their own ideas for films, and such forthcoming short features as *The Brave Little Toaster* and *Basil of Baker Street* promise to keep Disney on the cutting edge of the art and are being supervised by young studio animators. Perhaps more significant is that Disney's animators have survived the artistic and commercial challenges of two important rivals. Some

critics may still consider Ralph Bakshi the Great White Hope of alternative cartoons, but with two commercial flops in a row his Hollywood reputation has slumped. Don Bluth's classically Disney-like *The Secret of NIMH* did unremarkable business in the US in summer 1982, and it was unclear when he would be making a second feature film.

Wilhite has succeeded in keeping the studio up to date in the dizzying evolution of special effects. For *Tron*, he contracted out some of the effects to a company with the services of Richard Taylor, whom many consider the reigning genius of computerised graphics. Taylor also worked on *Something Wicked This Way Comes*, based on a Ray Bradbury story about a metaphysical circus in the Midwest. Directed by Jack Clayton, the film is due out in the United States in May. Another positive feature of the New Disney is that, in line with the rest of Hollywood, the studio is now giving its creative talents a share in film profits. Carroll Ballard was given his name above the title, where 'Walt Disney Presents' used to be. These days, most studio executives—remembering *Heaven's Gate*—are wary of boy wonder auteurs. Yet Disney, it is said, is likely to listen to a new idea.

When Disney agreed to let Steve Lisberger direct *Tron*, based on his own story, the 30-year-old had nothing more impressive on his résumé than an animated TV special which had never been aired. The only directive given to Hunter in making *Tex* was not to show teenagers smoking pot onscreen. Hunter said: 'I remember before I started production being summoned to a meeting of marketing and publicity people. I thought, "Oh boy, this is it, this is where the axe falls. This is where I get the Disney guidelines." And what they told me *en masse* was that I should not soften the material in any way, because they were so in need of a "hard PG", that their only fear was that I would soften it according to previous Disney guidelines.' Carroll Ballard says that Disney was 'supportive in a way that studios aren't any more' when production problems pushed *Never Cry Wolf* behind schedule and over budget. 'We are spending a lot more on this film than the subject matter really warrants,' he said.

Disney is under less pressure than other studios to keep a strong balance sheet on its movie side, not only because of the immense profit generated by the company's parks but also because it is not a cog in a multinational corporate machine. Everyone at Disney wants 'good' movies, even if there is disagreement about what constitutes a good movie. The powers that be want something for the 80s to set beside *Pinocchio*, *The Lady and the Tramp* and *Mary Poppins*. To Wilhite this clearly involves taking risks. 'I think you can learn a lot from the history of this company. Every time the company progressed, it was because of some chance-taking venture or some new idea or innovation.' ■

Strangers in Paradise

The Hollywood Emigrés 1933-1950

JOHN RUSSELL TAYLOR

To generations of Americans Los Angeles represented a sunny, carefree paradise where the living was easy. In the 1930s its appeal was no less intense to Europeans. After

Hitler came to power and as Nazi Germany gradually overran the rest of Europe, a stream of émigrés became a flood: and whether Austrian, Czech, French or British they all tended to find themselves temporarily or permanently marooned in Southern California, where the Germans had already sought a rallying-point to build a New Weimar.

In his new book John Russell Taylor chronicles the varied fortunes of this extraordinary group of people. It included, of course, such renowned figures of the world cinema as Buñuel, Hitchcock, Lang and Renoir, all of whom came to work in Hollywood; but Los Angeles also became the home of writers like Brecht, Huxley,

Isherwood and Mann, and of composers such as Rachmaninov, Schoenberg and Stravinsky, as well as a host of actors, designers and musicians. The story of how they came to terms with the place, its inhabitants and one another is – as this book demonstrates – frequently bizarre, often funny and sometimes tragic. £8.25

Film as Art

RUDOLF ARNHEIM

This is a pioneering and classic work of film aesthetics originally published in German in 1932. It is Professor Arnheim's provocative thesis that the peculiar virtues of film as art derive from an exploitation of the limitations of

the medium: the absence of sound, the absence of colour, the lack of three-dimensional depth. Silent-film artists made virtues of these necessities and were on their way to developing a new and distinctive art form, when the situation was irretrievably changed by the advent of the talkies. Thereafter, mechanical advancement

resulted in greater realism and a corresponding loss of artistry. The book is still essential reading for all students of the medium because the fundamental questions it first raised fifty years ago remain unanswered to this day.

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'(This) gathers together some of the most brilliant and perceptive pieces to appear in the quarterly *Sight and Sound* over the past half century. Splendid stuff, which includes Kenneth Tynan on W. C. Fields, Louise Brooks on Pabst and *Lulu*, Philip French on that under-rated British movie *Performance*, Alfred Hitchcock being witty about his alleged 'method', Raymond Chandler with a splendid feature 'Oscar Night in Hollywood' and the late, great Richard Winnington writing on De Sica's *Bicycle Thieves*.' (Peter Noble in *Screen International*). Illustrated with 73 stills from the films discussed. £12.50

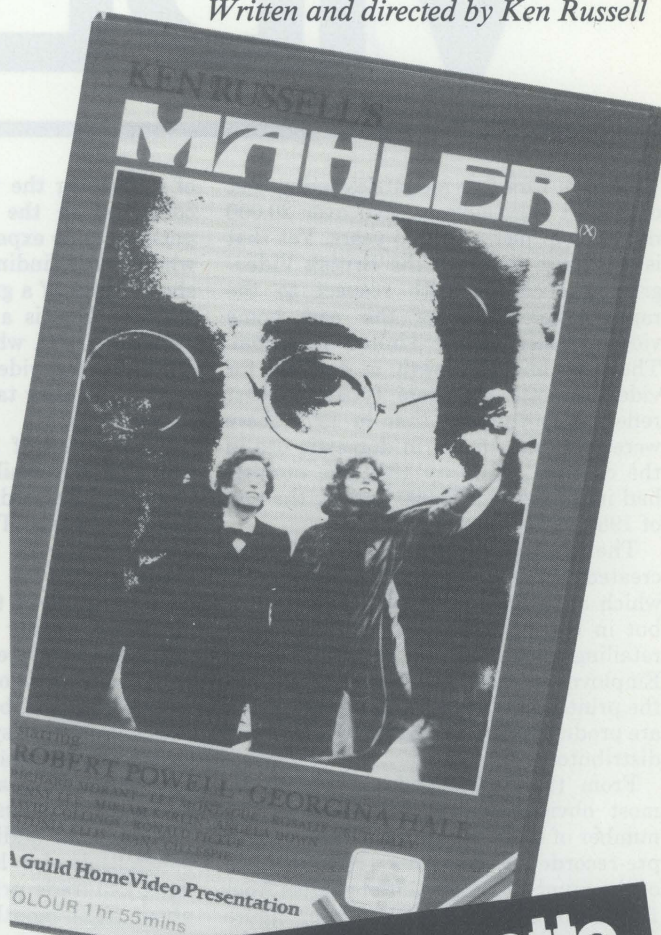
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VIDEO REP

There are very few industries today that can boast they have created over 20,000 new jobs in just over two years. Yet that is the claim made by the British Videogram Association with respect to the rapid development of the new home video market in the United Kingdom. The phenomenal growth in demand for video cassette recorders (VCRs) is best reflected in the fact that in 1976 there were less than 15,000 in domestic use in the country, while by 1980 the number had increased to 675,000 and by the end of 1982 to over 3 million.

The new employment has not been created in the manufacture of the VCRs, which are mainly imported from Japan, but in the duplication, distribution and retailing of the pre-recorded video tapes. Employment has also been boosted in the printing and plastics industries which are producing the packaging for the video distributors.

From the consumers' viewpoint, the most obvious growth has been in the number of stores which either sell or rent pre-recorded video tapes. The estimate of the number of such outlets varies from 10,000 to 25,000, but the lower figure gives a more accurate reflection of the stores concentrating on the video business. Many other retailers, such as butchers, bakers and drycleaners, seem to have caught the entertainment industry fever, and have tried running video libraries 'on the side', but the large sums which need to be invested in inventory have forced many of them to withdraw from what appeared to be a 'get rich quick' activity.

Quite clearly the video retail trade is very buoyant at the moment, with a total turnover (including VAT) of around £200 million in 1982 and estimates of a 40 per cent increase in 1983. Many people, however, have lost a lot of money by thinking that their redundancy pay would be well invested in a video store, without researching either the location or the consumer demand in the neighbourhood. Since around 90 per cent of all retail business in these stores is rental, it is very important to keep a broad range of popular titles in stock. This can be done by either buying from the video distributor or video wholesalers, of which there are about 30 in the United Kingdom, if the tapes are actually being sold by the video distributor, or in those cases where the video distributor only licenses or leases the tapes for rental, they must be acquired direct. In fact the distributors' different pricing structures and methods

of marketing the tapes are still causing confusion in the retail trade. This is perhaps to be expected in a new industry which is still finding its feet, but 1982 has shown signs of a growing maturity in the market. This is a marked difference to 1980 and 1981, when it seemed that the shelves of the video stores were designed to take as many tapes as the distributors could produce.

By the end of 1981 the shelves were full and the retailers were beginning to understand the demands and tastes of their customers. The fact that their cash was invested in stock gave particular attraction to the leasing schemes operated by some of the major distributors, including Warner Home Video and RCA/Columbia Pictures Video. During the year a number of other companies started leasing schemes, but reverted to the sale, plus surcharge, system of distribution. One company which did this was Thorn EMI Video Programmes (TEVP), coming in with a basic trade price of £30 for its 'A' titles, but adding a £15 surcharge to compensate for loss of rental income. This £45 trade price was maintained for about eight months and then the maximum trade price was cut back to £36, in order to stimulate sales.

By the end of the year TEVP had decided that steps should be taken to further stimulate consumer demand, and an average 50 per cent price reduction was introduced to nearly half the catalogue, putting the trade price of some tapes close to £13. This move is likely to be followed by a number of other distributors who recognise the need to stimulate a sales market among consumers. Obviously, a rental market limits the demand for pre-recorded tapes, since each video library only needs to stock four or five copies of the more popular titles and far fewer of the titles which are in less demand.

At least one of the major video distributors currently offers retailers the choice of opening a sales only account, which gives them access to one range of film titles, or a lease-sales account, which gives access to a much bigger catalogue. If the retailer chooses the latter account he is required to choose 20 or more films and is committed to a minimum leasing period of 13 weeks for each title at rates starting at £1.61 per week. Repeat orders for certain titles will be leased to the retailer at between £1 and £1.25 per week. These trade prices are reflected in rental prices to the consumer, which range from £1 per night through to £4 or

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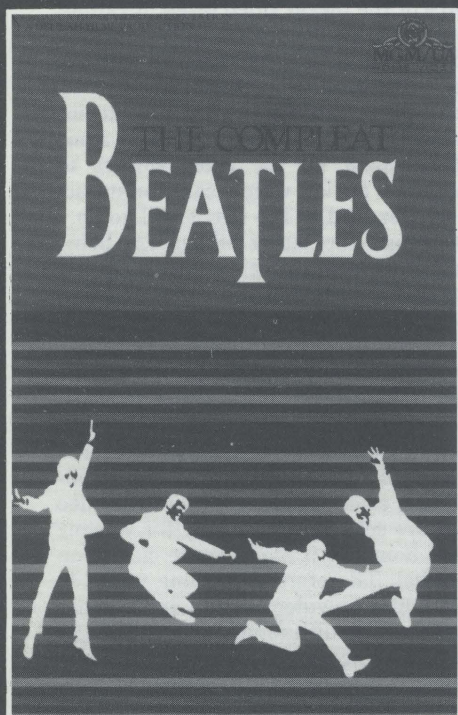
Marketing the product: promised horrors;

£5 for a weekend. Since there are no standard rental rates, it is important for the consumer to shop around and find the lowest rate available, bearing in mind that there is always a possibility that the cheapest rates offered—sometimes below £1—might well be for illegally duplicated tapes.

The greatest difficulty facing the person who is seeking to rent or buy a specific film on video tape is to find the store that has it in stock at just the time when it is needed. A check on the films available on video tape at the beginning of 1983 reveals that over four thousand titles have now been released, of which 100 per cent are available on VHS tape, 85 per cent on Betamax and 40 per cent on V2000.

The rapid growth in the availability of this 'software' brought with it a dilemma for the British Videogram Association (BVA), which represents the majority of legitimate video distributors and producers. While the BVA had been arguing that it should not be necessary to censor pre-recorded video tapes, it was becoming increasingly obvious that the less responsible video distributors were

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homely certainties.

releasing material which was likely to infringe the Obscene Publications Act. Many of these tapes were not only sexually explicit, but also contained material which depicted mutilation and even in one case cannibalism. Steps were taken by these distributors to advertise their product in the most lurid manner, often bordering the full-page ads in the video magazines with dismembered limbs.

Obviously, some people might consider such practices merely harmless, but there was a broad range of opinion which started to question the need for the theatrical censorship system to be applied to the video industry as well. The BVA therefore took the initiative in facing this problem head on in early 1982, by requesting the British Board of Film Censors to set up a joint Working Party to study the need for a voluntary classification system to be applied to video tapes and discs. As a result the Working Party, which included Lady Plowden and Leslie Halliwell, met a number of times during the year and considered the practicality of applying a categorisation system to video tapes and discs in a situation where no control can be

exercised over the end user. No matter how tightly one might wish to control the rental or sale of certain types of material, once it is in the home there is no way of preventing minors from viewing unsuitable tapes if adults do not put them out of reach.

At the time of writing, the Working Party has still not published its recommendations. However, it has just completed its report, which is understood to contain a code of practice which should be followed by the video distributors and retailers, as well as specific recommendations on the classification system which should be used on all video software. Whether this system should be voluntary or compulsory is likely to provoke a heated debate in the industry, but everybody is fully aware that unless a responsible attitude is adopted by all distributors, the authorities will have little choice but to impose regulations.

The most constant feature in the video business today is change. New titles will continue to come on the market at a surprising rate, and to match this the number of VCRs sold or rented will continue to grow rapidly. The consumer will be confronted with an increasingly sophisticated range of hardware, including VCRs with stereo facilities, which is likely to encourage the video distributors to release more tapes with stereo tracks. The distributors are still not enthusiastic about providing material for release on video disc, and a survey of the four thousand titles at present available on tape shows that only just over one hundred are currently distributed on disc. This is likely to change if the disc machines sell well in the market, but information available to date does not point to a very enthusiastic response from the consumer in the short term.

The dramatic growth of the video industry has been matched, if not surpassed, by the income and ingenuity of the video thieves. They have taken full advantage of the opportunities created by video technology to exploit every market open to them and, as a result, have made the United Kingdom the world centre for the duplication and sale of illegal video recordings. Although it is impossible to obtain reliable statistics on the volume of this underground trade, UK video industry experts put the total retail value of illegal exports at a conservative £100 million, with the retail value of the illegal market in the UK somewhat greater at around £120 million.

The factors contributing to the development of this very profitable black market in the late 1970s are varied, but the widespread availability of video transfer and duplicating facilities in and around London, together with the accompanying technical expertise, was an essential ingredient. To this was added the availability of 35mm English language prints of the very latest films which, because of international release patterns, were unlikely to have been

released theatrically in most European or Commonwealth countries.

This gave the video thieves the ideal opportunity, not only to satisfy the very lucrative Middle East market, where video recorders were already a social necessity, but also to meet the growing consumer demand for pre-recorded video tapes at a time when the major American and British video distributors were still planning corporate structures and catalogues. The vacuum existed and the entrepreneurial video thieves were there to fill it. Since those early days four years ago, the activities of the video thieves have spread into all markets in which they see commercial potential, and the relatively friendly atmosphere which existed between them in the beginning has now, on occasions, degenerated into physical violence. Video theft is now a serious and organised business.

The professionalism of the back-street operators is shown most clearly in the high quality of the packaging and labels, which are exact copies of the original material marketed by the legitimate video distributors. These counterfeits are a serious threat to the video industry, because the consumer is usually unable to tell from the packaging whether the video tape that he is buying or renting is legitimate or counterfeit. He is only likely to realise when he actually plays the tape, and even then he may think that the poor quality of the recording is due to a technical fault.

The retailer has less excuse for not identifying these tapes, because they are likely to be offered to him at a lower price than normal, and by someone who does not represent a recognised distributor or wholesaler. However, if it means that some extra cash can be made, many video retailers are willing to turn a blind eye. The same is true if they are offered quasi-counterfeit tapes. These are video recordings of films which are not yet legitimately available on video tape, possibly the latest theatrical releases, which have been packaged and labelled to look as though they are distributed by one of the major video companies. The video thieves have no qualms about using registered trademarks of reputable companies and even include spurious copyright warning notices which threaten dire consequences for copying this illegal material.

These counterfeiting problems are, curiously, not encountered in the United States, where the illegal recordings are all sold or rented on video cassettes which bear either a handwritten or typed label indicating the title of the film. No attempt is made to pass the tapes off as the genuine article, and therefore the consumer is forewarned that he is acquiring an illegally recorded copy.

The same unsophisticated form of video theft was predominant in the United Kingdom until 1981, and the continuing demand for these tapes showed very clearly that the consumer is quite willing to accept them, even though



they are known to come from dubious sources. In fact one of the most difficult tasks facing the film and video industries today is to convince the public that there is anything immoral or illegal in video theft. Many people even seem to admire the video cowboys, just as they may have a sneaking respect for someone who commits a computer fraud on a bank.

It was partly to tackle this public relations problem that the Federation Against Copyright Theft (FACT) was established in late 1982 by the British Videogram Association, the Society of Film Distributors (SFD) and the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA). Before the formation of FACT these three trade associations had each run their own teams of investigators and conducted their own independent, but co-ordinated, actions against video theft in the United Kingdom.

They had to concentrate their efforts on civil actions, since the police had indicated several years earlier that their priorities were such that manpower would be directed towards street crimes, rather than the economic crime of video theft. The most likely reason for this attitude was the extremely low level of criminal penalties for copyright infringement and the lenient attitude of the courts.

The appointment of Mr Robert Birch, former Chief Solicitor of Scotland Yard, as the first Director General of FACT, has obviously gone some way towards developing relations with the police. But the most effective measures are likely to emerge from the Private Member's Bill which amends section 21 of the 1956 Copyright Act. The Bill, which should be enacted during the present session of Parliament, provides for the increase of fines from £50 to £1,000 for each offence of selling or renting illegal tapes, with an option of a two-month prison sentence. For making, importing or distributing illegal video tapes, however, the video thief would face unlimited fines or imprisonment of up to two years for each offence.

The deterrent effect of this legislation is likely to be as great as the encouragement that it gives the police to institute proceedings, particularly since it also provides for new police powers of search of premises and persons where offences of copyright infringement are suspected of being committed. Obviously increased police cooperation will be of great assistance, and it seems likely that the more serious cases of video theft involving organised crime will now be handed over by FACT for criminal prosecution while FACT continues to handle other cases itself through civil actions. These often take the form of 'Anton Piller Orders', which can be obtained at short notice from a High Court judge without giving notice to the persons against whom they are directed. The Order requires the person named to allow the party whose rights are being infringed to enter the premises specified in the Order, to

inspect articles and documents relevant to the proceedings and either to remove them or take copies of them. The result is that it is often possible not only to seize quantities of illegal video tapes but also to get the names and addresses of both customers and suppliers of the video thief. This is an essential element in being able to get to the sources of the illegal material.

Another weapon which has proved extremely useful to the video industry is the quite broad power vested in the Trading Standards Officers under the Trade Descriptions Act to take action against retailers dealing in counterfeit video tapes. On summary conviction the retailer is liable to a maximum fine of £1,000 for each infringing article, and in indictment he faces unlimited fines and/or up to two years' imprisonment. The courts have recently started hearing the first cases brought by Trading Standards Officers, and are imposing fines which recognise the severity of the situation.

It is, of course, essential to combat the video thieves at all stages of their operations, and the fact that the film and video industries obtained over 100 Anton Piller Orders during the second half of 1982 testifies to the level of activity. However, it is important to remember that video theft is an international problem, and that the only way to trace the major operators is to follow them across national boundaries. It is, for example, quite possible that an illegally made master video tape of a new US theatrical release will be whisked over to Europe by air, transferred from NTSC (the US broadcasting standard) to PAL (the UK standard) in the Netherlands (or London) and then large quantities of the domestic half-inch video tapes will be duplicated for supply to retail outlets, complete with quasi-counterfeit packaging.

It is principally to monitor this international traffic that the MPAA maintains Film Security Offices in Los Angeles, New York, London, Paris, Hong Kong and South Africa, which are staffed by former senior police officers. Their role is one of coordination with the trade associations and lawyers in the different countries who are charged with fighting the growth of the underground video market. Although the MPAA Film Security Offices were set up to protect the interests of the major American film producers, as a matter of principle they deal with all cases which are reported to them, and take all possible steps to notify copyright owners, if they can be found.

In practice, it seems that the film industry is its own worst enemy when trying to counteract the development of video theft. Time and time again, court actions have been lost and the video thieves have gone free because it has been impossible for a distributor to prove chain of title from the copyright owner. It is, therefore, essential that both producers and distributors bear this in mind when preparing the legal documents cementing their relationships.

Similarly, it is important to remember

to exercise as much control as possible over the movement of film prints and master video tapes. It is very difficult to attract the full support of the police or the courts when the piles of film cans left in unguarded corridors present an open invitation to anyone interested in video theft. The print only has to be borrowed for two or three hours for the master video tape to be made, at which point the damage has been done.

It is often suggested that marking of prints is a deterrent, but while this is useful in aiding the identification of the source of the illegal video tapes, it cannot prevent the process of transfer from film to tape, or from tape to tape. To this end large sums have been spent on research, but so far no satisfactory 'spoiler' device has been invented. When it is, large sums will be spent by the video thieves to produce a device which can counteract the spoiler, and so the battle will go on.

Although the major efforts are being directed at combating the unauthorised duplication and sale or rental of video tapes, the film and video industries are also very concerned about the rapid growth of illegal public performances. These take different forms, but the most obvious are the screenings which take place in clubs, public houses, hotels and schools. Many people don't seem to realise that even legally distributed video tapes are sold or rented only for viewing in the home, as it states quite clearly on the label. Therefore, if anyone wants to show a film on video tape to an audience other than his own family he must obtain a specific licence from the copyright owner or its representative. Failure to do so means that the copyright has been infringed and lays the infringer open to civil action for damages. An increasing number of film and video companies are willing to supply these non-theatrical markets and, as in many other areas of the law, ignorance or an inability to read the label will not be accepted as an excuse.

The best efforts of the film and video industries to change the laws will not on their own change the attitudes of the consumers. So long as the man in the street sees nothing wrong in buying or renting the illegal tapes, and teachers have no qualms about letting their classes view 'pirate' tapes of *E.T.*, there is little hope of eliminating the worst forms of video theft. If the demand exists, the video thief will be around to meet it.

It is, therefore, essential that a well-presented campaign should be launched to show the consumer the consequences of total disregard of artistic talent and copyright interest. The current revenues derived from legal and illegal video industries might sound impressive, but it must be remembered that less than one British home in six has a video recorder. The time is likely to come very soon when at least one home in two will have video machines, and with 10 million potential outlets for the video thieves, the revenues will be staggering, as will be the film and video industries. ■

DOUBLE TAKES

Manila

The first Manila International Film Festival in 1982 was an event marred by several misadventures: a partial French boycott, organised against the repressive Marcos regime that was hosting the show; the tragic collapse of the hastily built festival centre, which killed scores of workmen (even by official estimates); and the coincidental exposé by French TV of the widespread child prostitution that made Manila so attractive to some foreign visitors.

The 1983 event, the organisers must have hoped, would proceed more smoothly. John J. ('Johnnie') Litton, director general of the festival, was in Cannes to drum up support from critics, film buyers and sellers. And towards the end of 1982, the stream of press releases began to flow: 400 films, 5,000 participants and 600 journalists would attend. *Gandhi* was announced as the closing film. The prestige of the jury had been demonstrated in the first year by the participation of the 'irreproachable Indian director Satyajit Ray', and a new and star-studded jury was announced for January 1983. Down in the fine print you could also have noted that dissident director Mike de Leon (whose Cannes entries *Kisapmata* and *Batch 81* provoked mutterings of official anger) had been co-opted: he was now 'responsible for technical matters in the selection' of the Filipino retrospective. The general mood was very confident. France had made 'a complete turnabout in attitude from last year, when a group of leftist directors spearheaded a boycott.' Jeanne Moreau would be attending. As would, more importantly, the head of Gaumont, Daniel Toscan du Plantier.

Under it all lurked a good deal of cynicism—certainly on the part of British participants. EMI put *Britannia Hospital* in for the festival even though the film had already been widely shown on the international circuit. But the festival was apparently short of titles. Of the fifteen or so Wardour Street distributors invited to Manila, some were candid about their reasons for going—a chance to lie on a beach in midwinter and enjoy some of the most lavish hospitality ever used to start up a new festival (or, as the publicity rather unhappily put it: 'Visitors can choose from 14 five-star hotels and travel in some of the world's lowest-rated taxi-cabs'). There was even some rather unseemly grubbing for festival invitations—several of the smaller distributors, who had not been invited out for a second time, were willing to plead for a ticket.

In the event, the rug was pulled out from under the house of cards. Three weeks before the festival was set to open on 25 January, First Lady Imelda Marcos announced that the government would no longer be carrying its budget (which ran at a staggering \$2.3m for the first year and was set at \$1.38m for the



Detail from a cartoon by film-maker Alan Parker. Reproduced by permission of 'Screen International'.

second). Much of the cash to cover the 1983 festival was raised by extraordinary means: for ten days cinemas were allowed to show uncensored versions of anything from mainstream Hollywood to hardcore porn—and this in a country where strict censorship normally prevails. The response, predictably, was overwhelming, and much of the resulting profit was ploughed into MIFF.

The elements of farce here are so striking that it could be easy to overlook the other side. Sitting on the jury, among others, were Carl Foreman, Lester James Peries, Nagisa Oshima, veteran Chinese director Xie Jin (*Two Stage Sisters*) and London Film Festival director Ken Wlaschin. One can understand why Richard Attenborough and Ben Kingsley, with so much riding on the success of *Gandhi*, might feel they simply *had* to attend this important Far Eastern event. But the same does not apply to the jurors listed above—all of them liberals, some even socialists. If nothing else, because of the previous French boycott, they knew of the Philippines' bad human rights record. Presumably none of them approved, but they attended all the same.

Already, some film executives were predicting that Manila would become a specialised Far Eastern market with a small festival in tow, rather than the sophisticated exercise in international propaganda that it had tried to be. This year, as well as those from Hong Kong, substantial delegations from Korea, Indonesia, China and Burma attended. Next year, without the official government backing to rely on, it looks as though the executives may be proved right, and Manila will become a more or less regional event. With a first-class return ticket from London costing a whisp under £3,000, even the 'lowest-rated taxi-cabs in the world' may not persuade the cost-conscious European film community to attend next time round.

All-American

'There was a period from the 60s into the mid-70s when there was this tremendous influence of European films. Whether it was Rafelson or Coppola, there were American film-makers dealing with American subject matter on a European model,' said Robert Benton in a January 1983 interview. 'Films like *The Graduate* and *Bonnie and Clyde* were essentially European movies which had been made accessible in terms of language to the American public. But recently, if you look at *E.T.* and *An Officer and a Gentleman* and *Tootsie*, films that have made very big money, they are all very American films. In its best aspect, this is a return to the well-made movie, to a classical form, since the movies of the 60s and early 70s were essentially experimental and not concerned with that purity. But the bad part is that American cinema has been trapped in the kind of naturalism that Kazan established, a certain aesthetic landscape from which directors like Coppola and Altman and Scorsese have been struggling to escape. So far they haven't succeeded.'

Benton of course belongs to the core group of Euro-aficionados, as much as Woody Allen or Paul Mazursky. And some of the 70s European influence was simply a matter of transposition—the playful sociology of *Breaking Away* and the abstract *mise en scène* of *Chinatown* are reflections of the British and Polish backgrounds of their respective directors. But the visionary qualities of *Apocalypse Now* and *The Black Stallion*, or the inspiration for De Palma's *Blow Out*, are powerful demonstrations of the general European influence. Even Walter Hill can be roped in: the source story for *The Warriors* is a piece of Greek history, and *The Long Riders* seems to owe as much

DOUBLE TAKES



Top: 'An Officer and a Gentleman'. Above: '48 HRS'.

to Albert Camus or Jean-Pierre Melville as to Peckinpah.

Now the tide does seem to have turned. In the past year, two 'independent' productions (films neither backed nor guaranteed by a major studio) have been smash hits with the American public: the low-rent adolescent fairy story of *Porky's* and the quintessential rebel/vigilante movie *First Blood*. Both are purely American films, without a trace of European self-consciousness. Among the studio-produced pictures, *An Officer and a Gentleman* repeats the process. The mixture of romance, misogyny and basic training may seem bizarre in its own right, but it comes straight from the gut of American populist tradition. Even Walter Hill, bull-headed maverick of the frozen 'action' picture, has straightened up. His *48 HRS*, a cop movie and buddy story set in San Francisco, wearing its jock-strap on its sleeve, has been enormously popular. In its blowsy way, it's a lovingly crafted movie, but it has none of the enquiring severity of his previous work. It seems that the same arc which

has taken Clint Eastwood from *Bronco Billy* and *Escape from Alcatraz* to *Firefox* and *Honky Tonky Man* is carrying most of Hollywood with it. The sad thing about the transition is that it seems to be leading us back into old territory rather than across new frontiers.

Stunts

As the British cinema has gone into decline, so it seems has its ability to dream up ingenious promotional stunts. The video business, now in the midst of a precarious boom, is the exact opposite—no matter the title, packaging and promotion are at the very heart of small-screen enterprise. So here, culled from recent efforts, are three of the more ingenious attempts to make something out of virtually nothing...

Linked Ring is the company name for ex-BBC director Michael Briant and ex-marketing man Martin Lambert, who

together have set out to make and sell feature-length productions which fall somewhere between fully fledged films and TV movies. Their first attempt, *Tangier*, cost £500,000 to make, and stars Billie Whitelaw, Ronnie Cox and Ronald Lacey. The idea is to market it directly to video users in the UK before selling it for TV and video release abroad. But to stimulate demand for *Tangier*—which turns out to be a rather stodgy TV-style thriller with Gibraltar locations—Linked Ring have tied the video sales and rentals to special discount holiday offers: £50 off a holiday booked with certain agencies for anyone who buys the tape (price £35), for instance. The company have advertised by direct mail to half a million homes and to several thousand video shops. The puzzle is to work out how Linked Ring manages this apparent subsidy of its own product. 'We earn it back on a commission arrangement with the travel agencies who book the holidays involved in the scheme,' explains Martin Lambert. Simple.

Just as Linked Ring call themselves 'the dealer's friend', so Euro-American Video are also appealing to the depressed retail end of the video business. In association with the Video Trade Association (which represents some 10 per cent of British retail outlets), they are offering individual dealers the chance to earn £10 for each tape they have in stock, by lending their tapes overnight to Euro-American, who then record 90 seconds of paid advertising on to the blank leader tape before the film itself. Euro-American are not paying anyone except the retailer for the use of the tape, and are apparently not infringing copyright. The only problem, as they admitted at their press conference, is that some of the American title holders (such as Disney) physically own the tapes as well as controlling the copyright. And the company has no agreement with Equity over rates for actors in their advertisements, which means the agencies won't take the risk of booking advertising time with them. In the meantime, though, they are successfully selling their tape-time to local advertisers, on the basis that the message will reach young and relatively affluent customers for a reasonable price.

The award for cheekiest small screen promotion, though, must go to brothers Harvey and Bob Weinstein from New York, who masterminded the two 3D TV screenings that were networked on ITV last December. The brothers (who produced *The Burning* and distribute *The Secret Policeman's Ball* in America) organised an elaborate £250,000 deal involving the British TVs franchiseholder, a Canadian promoter and a Californian manufacturer of 3D glasses. All for free—almost. The Weinsteins planned to import seven million pairs of glasses and sell them at 70 pence each, the week before transmission. Unfortunately, the IBA insisted that they could not advertise the name of their retail outlet (Rumbelows) on television. Meanwhile, *TV Times* was allowed to issue

free glasses as a promotional gimmick with every copy of the magazine. And to top it all, when the time for transmission came, the audience was not electrified in really large numbers: 12 million viewers watched the first transmission, but only 6.6 million watched the second (compared with 15.5 million for *Coronation Street* on the same day). But on both occasions the ITV companies were flooded with telephone complaints from those who had no glasses and didn't enjoy the loss of picture quality. The result, probably, is no more 3D TV experiments in the near future. But the Weinsteins still managed to sell £2 million worth of 3D glasses.



Verity

The British film community had anticipated the fall of EMI's film production chief Barry Spikings for a long time. When it finally came, over the Christmas-New Year break, the event provoked little surprise. Spikings had gambled on pointing EMI production firmly towards the American marketplace, and with such expensive failures as *Can't Stop the Music* and *Honky Tonk Freeway*, he lost. EMI had been absorbed by Thorn, the electronics giant, and a certain sense of economy was in the air. Spikings' flamboyant personal style seemed out of place. And so he went.

The choice as his successor of Verity Lambert—installed in the job for almost two months before Spikings left—also came as little surprise. Her strong record at the TV off-shoot Euston Films (*The Sweeney*, *Minder*, etc) included tight budgeting, creative drive and a feeling for British subject matter. But since her appointment she has made one serious tactical mistake. While the British press panted to know what subjects she was preparing, she kept silent. Then, in the course of a fleeting February visit to Los Angeles, she announced her first two projects: a thriller, *Slayground*, and an untitled comedy. It may just have been the forced error of someone trying to assert themselves in the show business capital of the world. It may have been a foolish bid for more column inches by EMI. But it was a mistake for a company which had clearly signalled a renewed commitment to British production and which presumably hoped for all the support of the British film press.

Visions

Barry Norman, now back in the cool seat at *Film '83*, is the perfect incarnation of television's general attitude to the cinema in Britain—cheerfully cynical, mocking the old uncle's rather creaky financial progress, unhappy unless absolutely necessary to show signs of respect or love. As television has systematically stripped the larder, showing more and more films for a negligible cost, Norman has at least seemed an appropriate figure, an effective messenger of scorn.

Which makes it rather sad that Channel 4's fortnightly film programme, *Visions*, has counter-attacked with a great deal of seriousness and not much visible sense of love for its subject. The programme's early interview with Paul Schrader (loosely tied to the release of *Cat People*), was hampered by the equally inexpressive stares to camera of both interviewer and subject. Unfortunately, too, Schrader's comments on the cinema in general and its future were very superficial. The programme's profile of Ivor Montagu seemed genuinely bizarre—not least because Montagu only really signifies British cinema to an audience that certainly would not be watching Channel 4. And the Gideon Bachmann profile of Fellini which somehow slipped into the *Visions* slot in early January was almost hallucinatory: Fellini's own grandiose style was overlaid with a rash of further adulation for the director as star.

These have been the worst examples, and there have been pleasant surprises. Unexpectedly, for someone who has been written about so drily, the profile of Canadian experimental film-maker Michael Snow was quirky and polemical, amused and amusing. The item with which it was paired, about the Israeli-based Cannon production group, was a lively attempt to get behind the cameras

and talk about film financing (despite a disastrously 'Whicker's World' presentation by former *Time Out* film critic Chris Auty). But undoubtedly the most exciting item so far has been Chris Petit's profile of Wim Wenders. Petit, who directed his first film three years ago only because Wenders co-financed it, says that the 'point was to show how cinema is not so much a matter of money or technique, more a question of *seeing*.' Using clips from Wenders' work, his observations, and shots taken inside Petit's house and on the streets of London, the result might have been a painfully embarrassing home movie. In the event, it was a model lesson in montage and *mise en scène*—a mini-fiction, with Wenders' low and uninflected voice filling something of the same role as the sibilant commentary in *Alphaville*. Above all, the item was deeply affectionate—for the cinema in general, and for Wenders' work as director and mentor in particular. If the programme could sustain that tone of affection—implicit or explicit—it would already be achieving something very different.

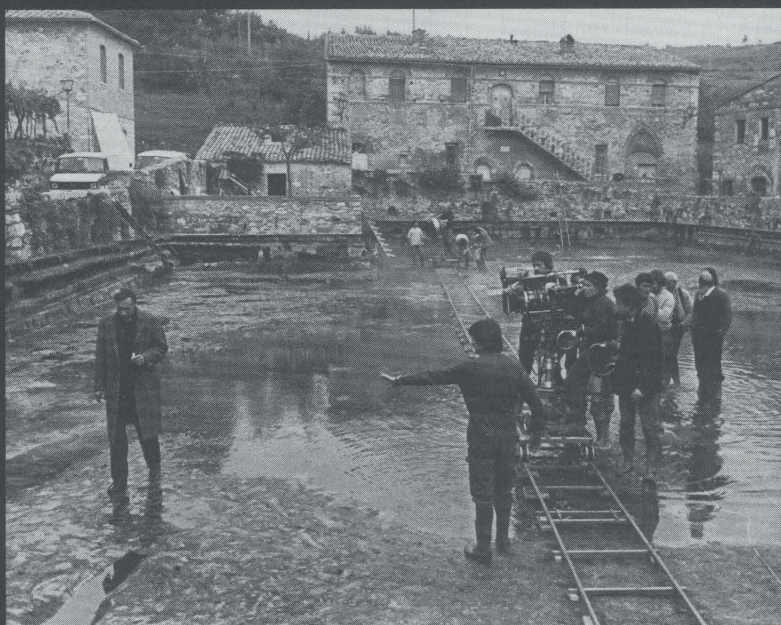
There are other, simpler changes that could be made. More short items. Interviews with technicians and writers as well as The Director. Some coverage of television itself, in those moments (high-budget series, single dramas) when it approaches cinema. Most of all, it seems wilful not to cover the productions which are shooting at London's four main film studios: over the past four months, the programme could have profiled *The Honorary Consul*, adapted from Graham Greene and directed by John MacKenzie with a bizarre Anglo-American cast; *Red Monarch*, the Puttnam-produced story of Stalin and Beria; even *Greystoke*, the mammoth project based on Edgar Rice Burroughs' original Tarzan stories, which has had a fascinating and chequered production history.

ALMEREIDA



Chris Petit and Wim Wenders. Photograph: Carolyn Johns.

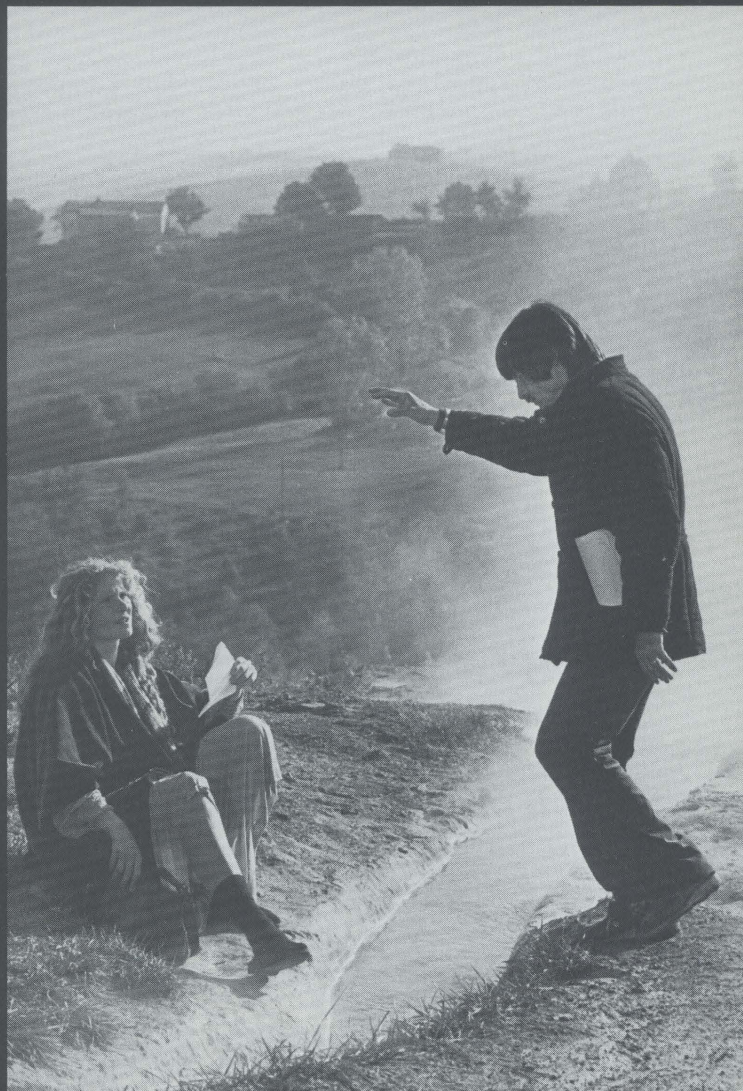
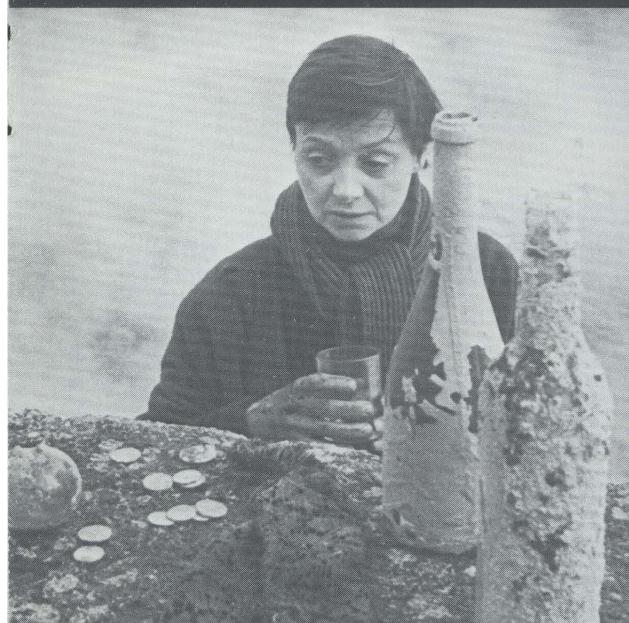
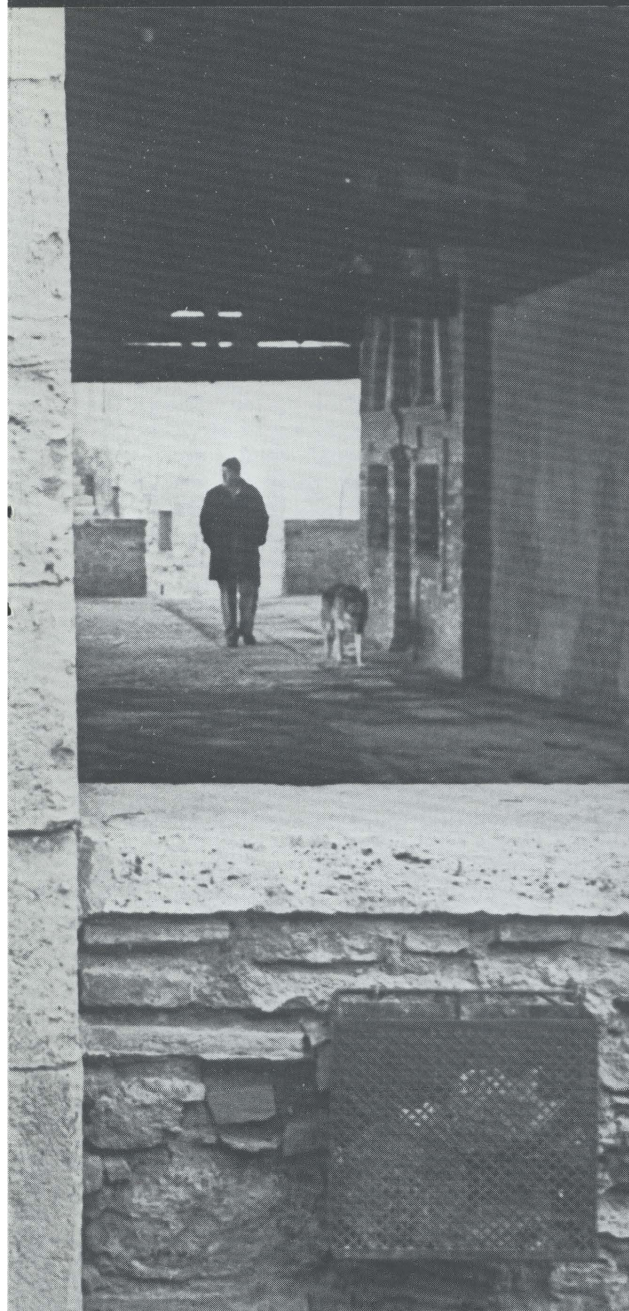
Tarkovsky's Nostalgia



photographs by Deborah Beer

Scripted by Tonino Guerra, with a Russian (a visiting lecturer in architecture), an Italian (his guide) and a Swede (a Tuscan professor of mathematics, and the lecturer's alter ego) in the leading roles, Andrei Tarkovsky's 'simple love story' *Nostalgia* is the first film by a Russian director to be made for European TV. Budgeted at £500,000, this RAI-Gaumont co-production in collaboration with Sovin Film, Moscow, was shot on location in Italy and is now in post-production. 'Nostalgia,' Tarkovsky says, 'is about the impossibility of people living together without really knowing one another, and about the problems arising from the necessity of getting to know one another.'

Left: Domiziana Giordano, Erland Josephson;
bottom left: Tarkovsky directs Oleg Yankovsky;
bottom right: Milena Vukotić;
below: Tarkovsky, Domiziana Giordano.



Kevin Tierney

Saturday night at the movies in Lanzhou

Somehow introductions always have a way of sounding pretentious, but in this case one seems unavoidable in order to provide some sense of context to what follows.

I have been in China for eight months and speak very little of the language. Trying to cover Chinese film from Lanzhou (situated in a direct line, halfway between Beijing and Lhasa) can be compared to trying to cover British film from Birmingham or the Hollywood scene from Pittsburgh (if I were to describe Lanzhou's air, these comparisons might seem less peculiar). Nevertheless, Lanzhou has cinemas—lots of them—and

I've been greatly assisted by my friend, colleague and interpreter, Mr Goa Hailong. Anyone who has spent any time in this country will, I'm sure, understand how important such friends can be. Finally, it is my purpose here to sound provincial. What the West needs *least* is the voice of yet another expert, someone who comes here, looks around for a while, and then writes back summing up not only the China of today, but *China*—a country that has existed for five thousand years and shows every sign of maintaining its record of longevity, in spite of all we have written and will, no doubt, continue to write.

Left to right. Provincial cinema: the local cultural showcase, originally the Russian Cultural Centre, in the days when they were still friends. Posters—an art form in China. The main poster in the centre picture is advertising a coming attraction, Roman Polanski's 'Tess'. Photographs: Kevin Tierney

WHEN I LEAVE MY apartment building at 7.45 pm for the university auditorium, accompanied by my interpreter, I am struck by two sensations. One is the darkness—no stars in Lanzhou and very few street lights in the compound which houses most university employees; the second is the sound of unseen bustle—a quiet kind of quick-step shuffle. This is not only my first chance to see a Chinese film in China, but the first time I've been out at night since arriving here a week ago.

As we approach the gates which divide the compound from the campus, a 60 watt bulb hanging naked outside the guard-house allows me to see what I've been hearing: people coming from every direction, moving through the darkness with a hush of suppressed excitement. This sound is punctuated by the noise of sunflower seeds being eaten: bite, crush, spit and the crunch of the rejects underfoot. Sunflower seeds are to Lanzhou what popcorn, gum and chocolate bars are to the West. Everywhere I look people are walking in the same direction and their movement forces us to quicken our pace. Men, women, children; all ages, shapes, sizes and descriptions—Saturday night at the movies in Lanzhou.

Outside the auditorium the queues are long but orderly. The auditorium seats 1,200 and tickets were on sale this morning for a couple of hours—good films take even less time to sell out. Because this is a *unit* auditorium (a unit is the place of work but also the basic structure of this society) which serves, among other purposes, as a cinema with both 16 and 35mm facilities, the admission price is half what it would be in a commercial cinema: one jiao instead of two (6½ or 13 cents). In principle, tickets for unit screenings are available only to the workers of that unit, but everybody has got friends. Films are shown in this auditorium on an average of twice a week, Wednesdays and Saturdays. People know if there's a movie by the posters on the community bulletin board outside



the student cafeteria. Same day advertising—they tell you in the morning what will be screened that night.

Inside, people are running about looking at the backs of seats for the same number as the one on their tickets; there is no such thing as unreserved seating in unit auditoria or the commercial houses. Before the film begins a series of slides is projected, all urging better behaviour: no talking, no smoking, no spitting, etc. These 'nos' are an integral part of a new Party propaganda campaign to encourage 'civilised behaviour'. People say they are trying but old habits die hard.

When the film begins, so does my interpreter and I feel badly for the people seated around us as they have to listen to his valiant efforts at simultaneous translation. Fifteen minutes into the film I tell him not to bother. The dialogue, however insightful and poetic it may be (it isn't), cannot possibly salvage anything from this waste of celluloid. Set in pre-liberation China, the film is a bizarre combination of styles. The heroine is portrayed as a kind of kitschy American 'cowgirl', complete with two six-guns strung across her breasts and down to the hips. When she isn't using her guns, she defeats all-comers with her martial arts wizardry, shot in the Hong Kong kung fu fantasy formula of speeded-up editing and reverse action which has her actually jumping *up* mountains. Sure-fire stuff, certainly, and the audience gasps at every leap.

I promised myself to forget the title and I have succeeded, but I haven't been able to forget what got the biggest laugh from the audience. Our heroine is soon converted from Robin Hood to People's Liberation Army revolutionary. One member of her gang says he wants to be a real thief—steal from the rich and give to himself. She rides her white horse to

his hideout, presumably to politicise him. When words fail, she challenges him to a duel of knives choreographed in Chinese martial arts style. He agrees to the duel and sets the stakes: if I win, he says, you will be my wife. Her response is given in extreme close-up: if you lose, you will be my son.

When the lights come on, my interpreter shakes his head: 'Silly film.' What's left unsaid but understood is, silly, yes—but what the hell else is there to do in Lanzhou on Saturday night? Or any other night for that matter. We make our way to the exits, just two of the *seventy million* people who will have seen a movie in China today.

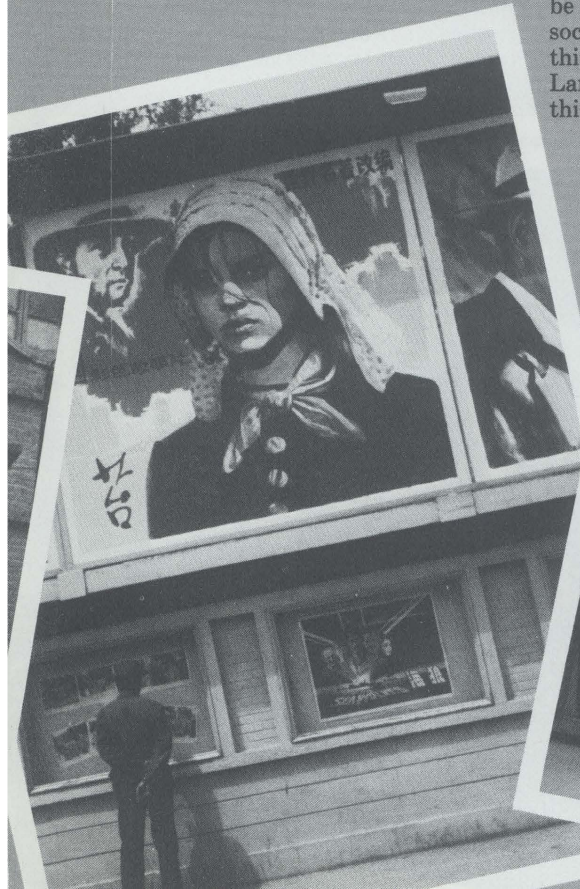
Numbers. In China, numbers are numbing. As overwhelming as that statistic may be, it is but one of the many in this country available to us every day. A report of a recently held Conference on Films states: '... according to the Film Bureau, China's film attendance was well above 10 billion in 1981.' Well above? How much more than 10 billion is 'well above'? People here are well aware of the effect their numbers have on foreigners. Some of my colleagues delight in giving me theirs and asking for ours: for example, the idea that the combined populations of Beijing and Shanghai are more than the population of Canada is especially amusing considering that Canada is physically larger than China. One must know one's place in the world, and isn't it more interesting to think of oneself as being part of 25 per cent of the world, than a citizen of just another country?

One reason for such large movie audiences is that in the commercial houses films run all day and the better part of the evening: from an 8 am start until the last screening around 9.30 pm. If the film is a 'big hit', additional screenings may be added, even at 2 or 3 am. A light social comedy before breakfast? Such things have been known to happen in Lanzhou. Starting times are scheduled this way for a number of reasons, includ-

ing a desire to accommodate those who work shifts. Then there is the problem of the unemployed—what should they do all day?—and the cinema provides at least a temporary source of escape.

While the admission price may seem ridiculously low to us, it is not so here, where every penny continues to count. In the commercial cinemas, of which Lanzhou has thirty, the price is 13 cents for what is called a 'common film' and 16 cents for a 'wide screen film'. At least these are the official prices established by the Film Bureau in Beijing. In reality, people are currently being charged more to see a new 'wide screen story film' (as features are known) thanks to a quietly capitalist-like trick that is loaded with all sorts of irony. I have paid as much as 25 or 30 cents to see a new film and when I asked why the price was so high, I was informed that the film would be shown along with some other films. How interesting. To me perhaps, but not to the people I was with. They asked if they could pay less and skip the first films which they knew would be documentaries, but were told, no, they had to pay for the whole evening. 'Not only do we have to watch science films that we do not like, but we have to pay more to do it.' This sentiment was later confirmed by a representative of the provincial film office as being 'quite widespread' but it is a policy. Scientific and cultural films are added to the bill along with new features because the authorities feel these films are important and should be seen by the people. The people's version doesn't quite seem to match: 'This is the way they can charge us more.'

Distribution in China is controlled by a national agency headquartered in Beijing. In each province there is a provincial distribution office which receives the assigned number of prints for its area from the national office. A small province, such as this one, usually receives two or three copies but that figure can fall to one or rise to five, depending on the film. Upon receipt of the prints, the provincial office will decide which of its districts should receive a copy and when. In Gansu province, the capital city of



Lanzhou is considered as one district, but the most important of the thirteen in the province. As a result, it usually gets at least one copy of all new films, with theatres often bicycling the reels from one to another with staggered starting times. But the leaders of the provincial film office go out of their way to tell me, 'Not all the time. We must be fair to all our districts.' Besides, no one wants to be accused of favouring the city over the countryside.

Each month the Gansu office receives approximately ten new films. Of these, three may be foreign films, but would be new only in the sense of being new to China. How these foreign films are chosen and why is difficult to understand, but probably has more to do with purchase price than either of the two loftier considerations, politics and art. Three British films received wide circulation recently after first being screened in a few major cities as part of a British Film Week, and Polanski's *Tess* was a big summer hit. Conspicuous by their absence are American films, whose producers are apparently more interested in royalties than outright sales, a notion that remains only a fantasy.

What is most pleasant is the fairness with which distribution is handled. Films open nationally, which means that just because Lanzhou is far away from major urban centres in the east, it is not made to wait, nor are the other regions. Thus, at approximately the same time that a new film is playing in Beijing, it is playing in the provinces.

The film community, like much of the cultural life here, cannot be understood only in terms of its present production figures. These do not begin to tell the story of the recent political past, nor do they reflect just how phoenix-like a phenomenon the present industry is, reborn out of the ashes known as the Cultural Revolution. Before 1966, during the first seventeen years of the People's Republic, 600 features were produced. During the next ten-year period, which most people refer to as 'the so-called cultural revolution', only 109 films were made. Most of these were filmed variations on the themes of the infamous eight 'revolutionary operas' insisted upon by Jiang Qing (Mao's wife and one of the Gang of Four), and are no longer in circulation. During this period, studios were closed; actors, writers, directors, producers, technicians and millions of others were sent off to the countryside to be 're-educated'. Some didn't survive. With the demise of the Gang of Four, production didn't so much resume as start all over again, and the figures dating from this time are remarkable. Between 1977 and 1981, 300 films were produced; in 1981, 90 new films were made, a figure that is likely to have been surpassed in 1982.

During all its life, the People's Republic has recognised the potential of cinema as an important form of propaganda and it comes as no shock to foreign eyes to see this manifested on the screen. When

I am told that an interview with the Provincial Film Office has been arranged and that one of the 'leaders' (the Chinese equivalent for boss) is from the propaganda office, I feel an uneasy reaction coming on. I am not quite sure what to expect, but when I see him, he isn't it.

'Yes, film is propaganda,' he says, and then proceeds to describe his view of it, as well as his specific function as head of the film office propaganda department. All films have their aims, he says, and the aim of good films should be to educate the people: knowledge, patriotism, behaviour. A good film must also be art, it must entertain people. 'We are trying to merge Art and Education, but the results aren't always successful.' As for his department's specific functions, they begin when a new film is received. The film is previewed, then he and his co-workers go about 'calling on people to see the film and helping people to understand it. . . After the people have seen the film, they can be educated.'

Listening to him describe in detail how he goes about his work, it is hard not to be struck by how similar he sounds to a marketing man interested in finding the right 'target' audience and mounting campaigns to get people to see the 'product'. These campaigns take the form of wall posters, still a major source of communication in China; a bi-weekly film newspaper published by his office; and preview screenings for the leaders of large units who are then encouraged to show the film. An example of this process at work would be the campaign mounted around the most recent film to cause a great deal of discussion and attention, *The Herdsman*. It also happens to be the best film I've seen here.

Based on a well-known short story, *Body and Soul*, *The Herdsman* was shot by the Shanghai Youth Film Studio on location in southern Gansu province. Briefly, it tells the story, mostly in flashback, of a reunion between a father and

son who have been separated for thirty years. On the eve of liberation, the father went off to America leaving his young son and wife behind. While everything goes well for him in his adopted country, where he becomes a 'major capitalist', life in the struggling new China has been hard on the son. The mother dies shortly after the father's departure; the son is forced to pay for the sins of his father, whose departure has left him with a legacy known in China as 'bad class background'. During the campaign of the late 50s to purge China of reactionaries, the son is branded a 'rightist' and forced out of his job as a teacher. He is exiled to the new territories (the northwest), where he reaches a crossroads: find a new life or end it all. He opts for the former, his work and attitude soon win him friends among the local herdsmen and he becomes a member of their tight-knit community. During the Cultural Revolution, an era that is touched on by many of today's movies but has yet to be confronted directly, he is once again hounded for his rightist background, but his new-found friends protect him from the onslaught of the Red Guards. He marries, has a child and when the Gang of Four is denounced, he is reinstated as a full citizen and given his old job back. At this point, his father returns for the first time and the son goes to Beijing to meet him. The father wants to take the son back to America as his heir. It's a difficult decision for the son, since he continues, despite everything, to love his father in the traditional filial way. Ultimately he chooses to remain in China. 'If you had come a few years earlier, I might have gone with you. But now I must stay and climb the slope of the future with the people of the country.'

The allegorical possibilities of this 'born again' statement are obvious, as is the film's ultimate message, a timely one considering the present open door policy to the West. Because of its message the

'The Herdsman'.



film was recommended to all, but particularly to the young for whom the lure of the West may become stronger and stronger. The propaganda department worked out a strategy to get the film seen as widely as possible. They control the commercial cinemas so that is no problem, but unit screenings are for many people their primary source of film viewing. Thus, all the appropriate unit leaders were invited to see the film and encouraged to book it. Many units had additional screenings. The provincial film paper devoted much space to interviews with the director, cinematographer, leading players, etc, and various reviews were published. Discussion of the film was encouraged at every level, from secondary schools to places of work. It's a 'hot property'. The results speak for themselves: in slightly more than three weeks the film was seen by 280,000 people in Lanzhou alone, not counting those who saw it in their units.

What is fascinating about this film to these foreign eyes is that in communicating its message rejecting Western materialism in favour of the struggle to bring China into the present, it employs both the film language and mythology of the 'new world', America. When the young hero decides against suicide, the director begins to show us why in the way he shoots these new open spaces, the free running horses, this expanse full of possibilities and new beginnings. It would have brought a tear to John Ford's eye. As well, the film manages to portray a world much closer to the real one than most Chinese films. Gone are the simple heroes and villains who must be all good or all bad. There is an exchange of gifts at the end between father and son, which is not only moving but symbolic: at this juncture compromise is possible.

Of course it is propaganda. Instead of pursuing the exploration of the environment as a metaphor for the hero's own search, the film opts for a patriotic leap

of faith which is not so much confusing as it is distancing. But for eighty per cent or more of its running time, there is no denying that the director, Xie Jin, one of the best known film-makers at work in China, is a world-class director who displays remarkable sensitivity in following the latest Party dictum that blankets all artistic activity here: art must serve the people.

Propaganda. Art. Education. Are these three compatible? In films like *The Herdsman*, yes. But for every *Herdsman*, there are six or seven failures, as there are failures of a different nature in every country where film-making is active. But what the leadership thinks of as propaganda, or what we might like to think of as art, does not necessarily take into account what local filmgoers seem most interested in, entertainment. It is difficult to have a 'serious' discussion of a film with either the students or teachers of this and probably most other universities because their idea of film is so alien to such a notion. For example, the idea that people actually teach film borders on the preposterous, and leaves them shaking their heads, no doubt perplexed by the inscrutable West. It is equally difficult to discuss the politics of a film or even film in general. In almost every conversation in English or in translation, but always unofficial, it is possible to detect an almost apolitical tone. Surprising to think that the people we consider to be among the most politicised in the world are the least interested in discussing such a topic. Or is it? The theory that such a topic should not be discussed with a foreigner should never be discounted, but even those who have spoken freely in other situations display similar lack of interest.

Too much politics, on the other hand, is a more realistic possibility, so much so that people seem to have learned to separate national politics from their daily lives in order to survive perhaps the most

tumultuous political history yet recorded. In forty years they have gone from war to civil war, revolution, liberation, development, the Russians, the Hundred Flowers Campaign, the Great Leap Forward, the Cultural Revolution, the death of the embodiment of their revolution, the Gang of Four, the Four Modernisations, and the 'open door' to the West. And that's not counting the other political shake-ups we don't even know about. To do no more than simply cope, a filtration system would have to be at work, and it is this filtration system that changes propaganda to entertainment. As everywhere else in the world, there is good and bad entertainment. And like audiences everywhere else, people here respond accordingly: they stay at home, go to another movie, or line up at 3 o'clock in the morning to see the film everyone's talking about.

Although more and more people are now buying television sets, and more and more funds are being devoted to television production, movies remain the most important source of entertainment in Lanzhou and elsewhere. I have been to four or five different cinemas on various occasions and I have yet to attend a screening that was not virtually a sell-out. Even parking is a problem: lots, tickets and attendants. Many people ask about foreign films and clearly more of these would be welcome. Should the present political situation remain stable, the future for Chinese films should be bright. In 1982 the People's Republic was represented for the first time in the official competition at the Cannes festival with *The True Story of Ah Q*. A retrospective in Italy last year of 135 Chinese features dating from the 20s to the present is a most promising omen, for it shows that the authorities are interested in more film exchanges with the West. Even more important, they are interested in their own film history—an industry did, after all, exist before liberation. ■



Right: Jean-Luc Godard. Far right: Hanna Schygulla, Michel Piccoli, Godard.

Jean-Luc Godard's *Passion*, which was shown at the 1982 Cannes Festival, opens shortly in London. It's a film 'about the nature of cinema,' Richard Roud wrote; also about painting and music, since the film that is being made within the film consists of reconstructions of famous paintings. Godard calls it 'a bit difficult'. Here some of his comments on *Passion*, and indeed about the nature of cinema, made at Cannes and elsewhere, have been translated and coordinated by

GIDEON BACHMANN



'In the cinema, it is

J-LG: At some time, a man has to start thinking about his grandchildren. Films made today will eventually be sold to television and on cable, whose format is the old 'Academy' frame, known today as '1:1.33', the format of the silent film. In the cinema, on the other hand, the usual projection format is 1:1.66 or even 1:1.85, but since I am co-producer of my own film I have to think about future sales and so I chose the old standard. I am not the only one: Francis Coppola shot *One From the Heart* in the same screen format. It seems normal to me that one should adapt oneself to the format of television. The important thing is that the feeling of the framing shouldn't be destroyed in the projection; I don't want to say the framing in its exact form but the feeling of it, since I myself am not very good at framing anyway. It would be different with an Antonioni or Eisenstein film, where the framing is very strict. But of course if the 1:1.33 frame is badly projected, unsharp for example, as seems to happen in most places today, it is exasperating. I allow projections of my films in 1:1.66 as long as the projection is good, and after all it's the centre of the frame that counts; it's even worse in the USA where they project at 1:1.85 and the Americans mostly don't even see the eyes of the actors in European films ... For this reason I usually leave quite a bit of air in my frames.

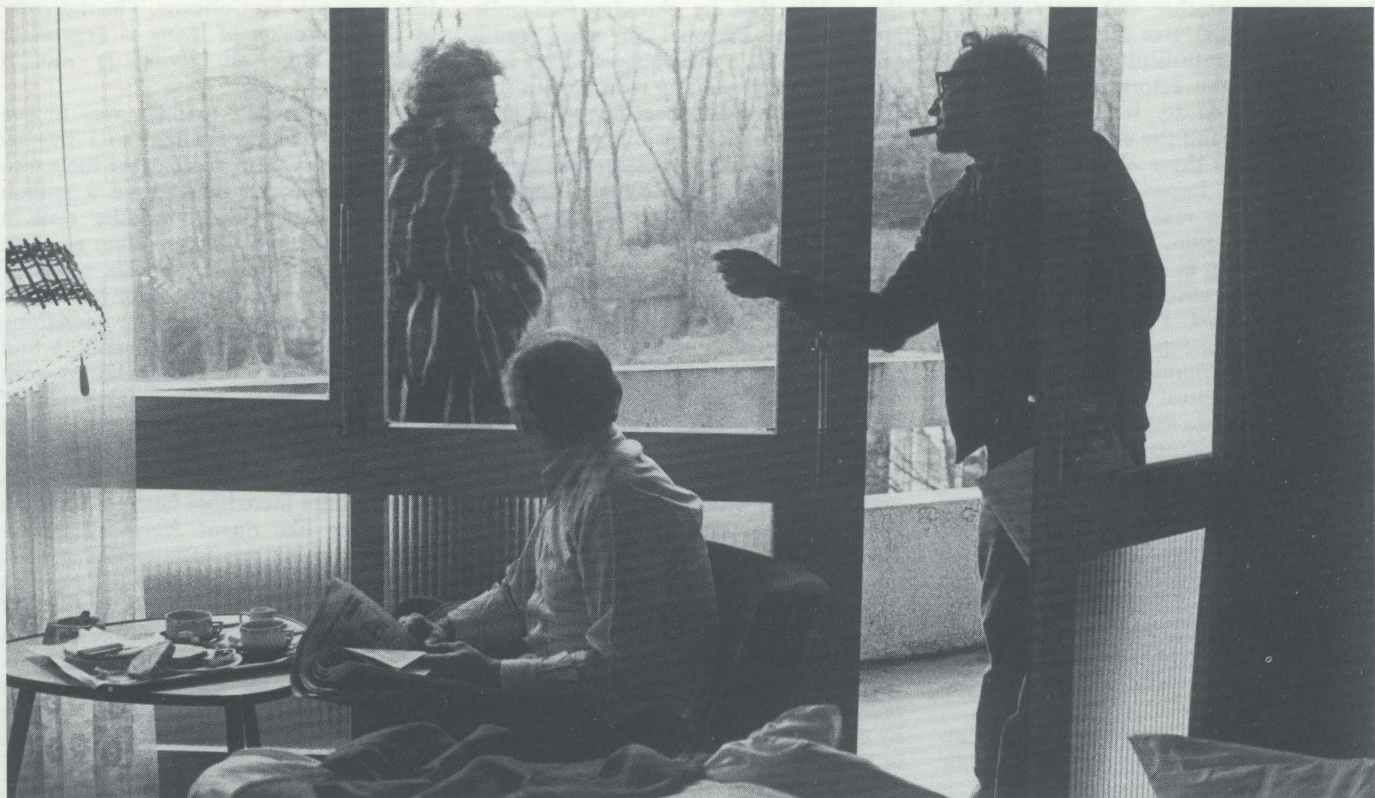
In any case, I have tried to stay away from making 'cinema in the cinema', in

other words, not to do anything like *Day for Night*, or *Contempt*, or *The Bad and the Beautiful*, or anything resembling Pirandello, so that people should not think that cinema in my film is more than a metaphor, more than a representative for work on a piece of art. I used television cameras because people know what they are, having seen them on their own home sets, and cinema is in the film only as the representative of art. Since the cinema is my art, I use it as a metaphor to show work on a grand scale, but I am not making a film about film-making. In any case, film-making in itself has no importance whatsoever; all you ever hear in a studio are these three phrases: 'let's get down to work', 'there isn't any money' and 'you don't love me any more.'

I have often said that there is no such thing as an 'image' in cinema, but there is always an image before and an image that follows. The present doesn't exist in film. It is never Monday. It is always either Sunday or Tuesday. Monday is just the link between the two. And that's what the image is. An image is never strong because it is terrible or brutal, but because the solidarity of ideas is far away and just. This is a phrase from Pierre Reverdie, one of the early surrealists, spoken in my film by Jerzy Radziwilowicz, the Polish actor, and I was happy to have a Polish actor say this: 'The solidarity of ideas is far away and just.'

Anyhow, everything in the cinema is

always between two things. The principle of my film, or maybe you could even say the principle of my cinema, is that everything is always between the probable and the possible, in a sort of equilibrium. I have often considered myself as existing in a scientific-artistic dimension, but since I am not working in a scientific area what results is the approximate, the contingent. The word I like to use for my cinema is 'aleatory'. Thus the light, for example, is always between day and night, between the clear and the obscure, the Italian producer is between arrival and departure, Jerzy is between an open girl and a closed girl, everything is always between two things, two clarities. There are always two things to say, one runs from one side to another, forwards and backwards. One begins to stumble and falter, and in the end, to stutter. In a way this approach is closer to that of painters and musicians, and to the approach that cinema had in the days of its invention. Mack Sennett had no scripts. If you read Robert Florey's memories of the early days of Hollywood you will find that scripts were invented by the book-keepers. They needed to know what Sennett had shot during the day. So he made a list of what he used: a pair of stockings, three cars, two policemen, a girl in a bathing suit ... and only later did they add verbs and adjectives. 'A girl in a bathing suit loves a policeman who has three cars ...' And they called this a scenario. But it is money that created the



never Monday'

scenario. I should be blessed for not making scripts...

Anyway, to get back to what I was saying: I always start too soon and arrive too late and eventually come back in the middle... stuttering. That's why the actors in the film stutter, too. Jerzy says at a certain point, 'You can't talk about the factory, about the world of work, just like that.' It's in answer to his assistant when he asks why Isabelle keeps stuttering all the time. But that is something that came about in the work on the film and which seemed to me to fit. At first my work with Isabelle Huppert was a little mechanical. Something had to be added. And then her stuttering seemed to express my feeling that the language of the workers is like a stutter, a difficult way of expression. You can see this very well on television, when someone from the working world is asked to express himself—rarely as that happens. It always takes a few minutes longer than with others, since it involves silences and hesitations, except when they get union representatives to talk who have it all down pat, speaking like mother and father, saying the phrase. If you remember, in the film, there is the sentence: 'say the phrase, say your phrase', and Isabelle has difficulty in saying her phrase. That's why she stutters in the film. You could apply the same kind of reasoning to the continuous coughing of Michel Piccoli, the factory owner. He chokes on his words. He strangles them.

Their speech defects reflect their positions: he out of malevolence strangles his words, and she out of sincerity stutters hers. That expresses the relationship between worker and boss.

The film practically started with my listening 450 times to the Mozart Requiem, thanks to a Sony Walkman, and then Anne-Marie Miéville made me listen, one day, to the Fauré Requiem, and I thought that there were also Czech musicians and French ones, and that one should try for once to create almost a book-keeping type of democracy on and in a film. Everything was to be completely equal. The two images, Sunday and Monday, were to have equality. No more brightness than darkness, no more cars coming than cars going, no more people who shout than people who whisper, no less time on stage for the secondary parts than for the primary ones (which got everybody upset, including myself), no more exteriors than interiors, in short—a total democracy, which of course is a total utopia. As much painting as music, neither one without the other, and no more reality than metaphor. That was a bit the subject of the film; one could say, as a subtitle, 'Passion, the world and its metaphor', or, 'the social element and its metaphor'. And of course we don't know any more whether it's the metaphor which is 'real' or the reality which is only metaphorical.

That is common, of course. But my original idea was a common one. That in

the smallest thing—a little boy playing with his sister, a father who slaps his daughter, an ordinary theft, never mind what—there is a great passion, a great violence. No great wars are needed; it's the smallest and most ordinary things that have always counted, and what profoundly interests me, for example, is the small things, the ordinary things, that have been transmitted from the past. I love to watch these ordinary things in the street—something which is the work of painters. I can't draw like Daumier, but I look at people as much as Daumier did. And so, in order to bear witness to *the grandeur of the ordinary*—which was the purpose of the film—I needed to dive into all that had been left, all that there had been before. Art, and that which it transmits. The Romans didn't leave cars behind, but frescoes. Cavemen didn't leave words but signs. The 18th century left us Beethoven. We weren't there, but through knowing Beethoven's Ninth we can know how the people of Marseilles sang the Marseillaise when they marched up to Paris. And in my film, to show the deep engagement of a small working woman trying to fight for justice, I had to choose images and juxtapositions from what is greatest in the revolutionary past, in order to speak about revolution today.

Art has provided the necessary metaphor in all times, and all we really have to or can do is copy it, while respecting Beethoven and at the same time respecting oneself. Painting and music were the

two siblings, brother and sister working towards this goal. But the work was very hard, and it was difficult to explain to the crew and to the actors what this work really amounted to. It's an effort that really goes beyond the means of one man, to correlate all these elements to create the necessary impact and interaction. That was the real work behind the making of this film, and it is work which doesn't show up at all on the screen: this fact that I had started with a sound, the sound of Mozart. I kept asking, 'What image could accompany it?' (let's call it the image of Sunday) to provide the point of departure for that image of Monday of a little worker fighting for her cheque. What painting should I use so that the music and the painting could bear witness to the great burden and concern she has weighing on her heart? That was the great labour of scripting the film—in which, by the way, Hanna Schygulla and Jerzy Radziwilowicz, who were free during the month that we were preparing it in Switzerland, played a large part. They helped the film very much indeed.

Making the film, it all becomes a matter of how properly to respect the public that will see it. Today, the public is everywhere, especially since everybody has a TV set at home, and in a way we are all the same public. I mean we are all the same because we all have television, just as we are really all citizens because we all have tables and chairs at home. The first way to respect the public, I think, is to take maximum responsibility for the film, along with the first members of the public I usually meet: the producers. The financiers, I assure you, in their own way (which may occasionally be condescending) have a very clear view of the public. So I am my own co-producer in order to have a link with the public, which is also more real because it is a link of money. I am not different from anybody else in this sense: I calculate that an honest salary in France today is between 4,000 and 10,000 francs per month. I live on the estimate for the films. When I make films with very little money, I live poorly. And when I live off films where there is money, like this one, I live very luxuriously (until the point when the others told me to keep, *quand même*, a little bit of money for the film...).

Another way to respect the public is to remain aware of the fact that it is used to a certain ease with which films can be understood, and this is a difficult film. Actually what happens is that the public, with the habit of easy understanding brought about by television, doesn't really respect itself very much. The spectators at a football match respect themselves a lot more: when they don't like the game, when they see a foul committed, they express themselves, they take themselves more seriously than the spectator of films. And then another way to respect the public, for me, is to use people the public has chosen. I try to make my own choice, and then I take known actors. It is not I who makes them known, but the public. It is thanks to

the public that by choosing Schygulla, Huppert and Piccoli I can more readily find money for a risky subject. This is all part of a very realistic relationship with the public. And I respect myself in sharing this real responsibility: after all, nobody makes films to please themselves, and I do want this film, which I find a bit difficult, to reach the public, although I am not sure that it can. And this is another reason why I want to be my own co-producer: it's like a restraining influence for that part of me which wants to be more artistic. Alain Sarde, my co-producer, knows that I am much crazier in the financial matters than in the artistic ones, where I am very prudent, and know pretty much what I want.

Four lighting cameramen refused to make the film with me—Vittorio Storaro, Ricardo Aranowicz, Henri Decae and Henri Alekan—because of my insistence on using exterior light. I had made it a condition that they would come outside with me to look and to listen to the light and to record it; I wanted to work with them in finding the space in which the telling of the content becomes possible by starting with a certain light ('Trouver le lieu où la narration serait possible'). Then I remembered my old friend Raoul Coutard, who is not, like the others, a colonel of photography but rather a peasant of photography (despite his experience in Indo-China...), a humble and very practical man. He gave me confidence when I came into the studio (out of doors I feel stronger), since I was afraid that I wouldn't know what kind of light, for example, comes from the sky on to landscapes in paintings, and what effect certain forms of light have on faces in the studio, where the exterior light has to be recreated and where everything begins with black. But in Coutard I found a man who provides a nourishing soil for the film—a unique and emotional experience. (I may tell you that when I saw Antonioni's *Identification of a Woman* I admired the by now famous scene in the fog. But then I found out that it was shot in the studio, which is why, after all, I prefer *Red Desert*...)

When I say 'taking maximum responsibility for the film' I also mean that one has to take risks. Jacques Rivette calls this the element of danger; I tend to call it urgency, but essentially it is the courage to take risks. That is another reason why it is important to co-produce one's own films: it's difficult to be a serious director if you don't risk your skin. It is the same as the principle pronounced by Jerzy in the film: 'You have to live the stories before inventing them, but since you live them in order to invent them it means that you have to invent your own life.' Which is the metaphor for the other, then? In a way, I think my film is the opposite of Wenders' *Hammert*, the most beautiful of Wim's films which, by the way, seems to have been appreciated only in a condescending way: the story of a man who takes risks, who risks living his stories. This is stronger than Gide or Pirandello; in the Wenders work there is this incredible inner force which all the same has the air of nothing important,

like a sax solo by Coltrane. The difficulty of the profession of living is expressed. Because, after all, living is also a profession.

I simply haven't found a way to live except by making cinema, so I live by finding, every year, some other fools who are willing to put up at least a million dollars to open, in six months' time, a factory which will shut up shop again in nine months, and out of this money I manage to pry loose the sum I'd like to be able to spend per month: something between 6,000 and 10,000 francs. I find this simpler than to go and try to work for Renault, for example. It takes a lot of faith, and maybe that's why people still go to the cinema: it is a world without laws but a world with a lot of faith. Some films require incredible faith. If you take something like *Sayat Nova* by Paradzhanov, I think you have to live at least fifteen miles away and feel the need to walk there on foot to see it. If you feel that need and give it that faith, the film can give you everything you could wish. It is a film, by the way, which has given me a lot of faith in myself, since it confirmed some ideas I had about film technique. In *Passion* I had hesitated a bit in my intention to desynchronise, to some extent, all the dialogue. In scenes in which I found a defect, for example, I realised I had to do something with the sound, and, in any case, I feel you can speak with your ears, look with your mouth, and in French, as you know, we say 'manger des yeux'. *Sayat Nova* gave me the faith that a whole film can be made like that. And while it is true that you have to think about the public, it is also true that you have to think about other film-makers.

Because of my education and experience, I started making films for cinéastes, thinking of them as the first public. But respecting oneself and one's intentions, and at the same time being like everyone else, that is like being at home, like film-making as a search for a home. I think, in the end, it is this search which makes me keep on making films. After all, at 50 one doesn't see things in the same way as in one's younger days, and I have always preferred things that were beginning, even beginning with a certain rage. Picasso's motto, 'I look for the worst,' has always been my motto as well. I look for the cinema, I search for it, to the point where, again in Picasso's phrase, 'painting will refuse my canvas.' I think there is an ancient belief in all of us that there is something inside us which goes beyond ourselves, and art reassures, people need it. Why else do they stand in line to see sunflowers painted by Van Gogh, who was looking for a certain quality of yellow and went mad over it? Looking for a home is looking for humanity, again in Van Gogh's words. When writing to his brother Théo about his work—which he, who painted, called 'fabricating ideas'—Van Gogh said: 'I don't have children, but is that a reason why we, who make ideas instead, should not be part of humanity?' ■

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EVERYONE KNOWS THE production history of *Blackmail*, largely through the accounts of it given by Hitchcock himself. It was planned and begun as a silent; then, as the British film industry's conversion to sound gathered momentum, instructions were given to remake the final reel with dialogue; but Hitchcock, foreseeing this, had made contingency plans of his own. Having kept most of the sets standing, he went back and re-shot with dialogue many more scenes than the producers were expecting. *Blackmail* could thus be unveiled in June 1929 as—with only slight exaggeration—'The First Full-length All-Talkie Film made in Great Britain'. Its reception both commercially and critically was triumphant.

Two months later, with much less fuss, came a second *Blackmail*, silent, with titles, to serve those cinemas that had not yet converted to sound. This silent version has never been lost or unknown. Successive editions of *The Film Till Now* reprint Paul Rotha's verdict from the first (1929) edition that 'Incidentally, the silent version was infinitely better than the dialogue.' Later writers on Hitchcock such as Chabrol and Rohmer (1957) and Charles Higham (1962) seem to have seen both, and Truffaut, in the 1968 Hitchcock interview book, states that a silent *Blackmail* is readily available in (French?) film archives, but I've seen no first-hand reference to it that is later than Higham's essay. No one lately seems to have looked for it or speculated about it, which is surprising given the volume of recent work on Hitchcock, on the coming of sound, and on *Blackmail* itself. One factor is that the National Film Archive, main source for prints of Hitchcock's rarer British films—it has been sending them all over the world recently for festivals and retrospectives—has never had a viewing copy. Now, having printed up material long held in the vaults, it has a handsome one.

These two films of *Blackmail*, silent and sound, together make a case study that is certainly fascinating and possibly unique. Does any film of the period survive, was any film even made, in two versions that have quite such a complex relation to one another as these two? Three categories of 'hybrid' are familiar enough: (a) part-talkies, like *The Jazz Singer*; (b) films that were first sound, then silent: early talkies out of which a silent version for backward cinemas was subsequently hacked; (c) films that were first silent, then sound: films made and even released as silents, then recalled to have a soundtrack added, with dialogue in (typically) the last reel. Example, a British contemporary of *Blackmail*, *Kitty*. Directed by Victor Saville, released silent in January 1929, released with sound June 1929; for the trade paper *The Bioscope*, 'The introduction of dialogue towards the close acts like a tonic.'

Blackmail belongs in a separate category in that, to recapitulate, it was in order (1) shot silent (2) reshot, not just

in the last reel, with dialogue (3) released as a talkie (4) released as a silent. The talkie incorporates silent visuals, the silent incorporates talkie visuals. This essay will simply present and discuss some of the complexities. I should mention that I have not at this stage sought out studio records, or surviving crew members, or other witnesses (e.g. the Queen Mother, who as Duchess of York visited the set with her husband during the shooting). This is not to discount the use of such testimony, but there is an initial task of looking closely at exhibits A and B, the films, if only to start going beyond myth and hearsay and formulating the right questions.

The first surprise is that the bits that are always said to be the same in both versions are not, strictly, the same at all. The first reel documents the arrest and booking of a suspect whose case will have no direct connection with the main story. (According to Thorold Dickinson's report from New York to *Picturegoer* in January 1930, this prologue was cut out of the American print.) The soundtrack consists of music plus a few effects. Plainly this was all shot silent and simply dubbed over for the sound version without any restaging, and the two prologues are, indeed, shot by shot the same, down to shot number 64 in each—except that the footage used is not quite identical. Even the simplest insert shots, such as the plaque identifying New Scotland Yard, on close scrutiny reveal tiny differences between silent and sound. The reason presumably is that two negatives were required, one for the silent prints and one for sound, and that to use a *dupe* negative for (parts of) either version would have meant a loss of visual quality in the prints struck from it. Part of Hitchcock's calculation, then, in planning for a sound version while shooting the silent, must have been to ensure that there were two usable takes of every shot, so that two original negatives could be built up. (This would be comparable to the 1920s Hollywood practice of shooting with two adjacent cameras to produce

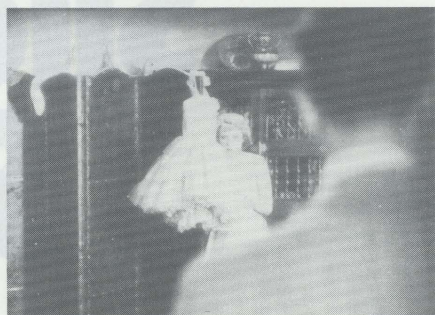
Blackmail: Silent & Sound

CHARLES BARR analyses
the two versions of
Blackmail. Both will be
shown at the NFT in May,
the silent version in
a new Archive print.

two negatives, for home and export prints; here in *Blackmail* there is no question of two simultaneous cameras, but in every case the two takes are too similar *not* to have been shot in quick succession.)

This principle applies to many scenes later in the film(s) that look identical at first sight, including Hitchcock's cameo as a harassed passenger on the underground. That familiar one-shot scene has no dialogue, only noise, and one can therefore take it to be, like the whole of the prologue, material shot (twice) first time round; the sound scene is 'silent' material, dubbed. But there are also sequences which work the other way round, where visuals shot on a sound stage are clearly being used, with titles intercut as appropriate, in the silent version as well. (What is hard to guess, from the evidence of the films alone, is whether these visuals replace silent material already shot, or whether Hitchcock had left the silent shooting incomplete in the knowledge that alternate footage from the dialogue shooting would satisfactorily fill the gaps.)

Both films, then, are revealed as complex hybrids, works of continuously inventive *bricolage*. Juxtaposing them scene by scene, one registers a set of permutations: points at which, variously, (a) both versions use 'silent' visuals; (b) both versions use 'sound' visuals; (c) silent and sound visuals are mixed within a scene; (d) the two films use entirely different visuals. This last case is the most obviously significant, and it is time to give some visual examples.



Sequence 1

Assault on Alice White. After a row with her policeman boyfriend, she accompanies an artist to his studio. Changing back out of costume behind a screen, she finds that he has taken her dress.

Sound: a single shot of 45 seconds. Alice discovers the dress has gone (fig 1) and pleads with him; he throws it away and advances on her (fig 2).

Silent: Alice discovers the dress has gone. Close-up of the artist (fig 3). Title: 'Alice'. Her response (fig 4). The artist (= 3). His words (fig 5). Alice pleads (= 4). He throws the dress aside and moves forward (fig 6). Track forward across the intervening space at his shoulder (fig 7) as he approaches Alice; he grabs her (fig 8).

These eight shots and two titles run scarcely 30 seconds in all; the first close-up (fig 3) is only 16 frames. The silent sequence, then, is based on montage, reverse-field cutting and mobility of camera and viewpoint; the sound sequence has none of these. At once, Hitchcock's oft-repeated distinction between 'pure cinema' and 'photographs of people talking' (and, in this case, making music) comes to mind: see for instance chapter two of the Truffaut interview book. The number one rule in adapting stage material (which *Blackmail* had been) is to ensure that 'the camera is inside the action'—spatially and thus psychologically. Avoid the front-on theatrical viewpoint. But 'with the arrival of sound the motion picture, overnight, assumed a theatrical form': the camera, as here, moves back 'outside' the action. This reading is in line with Rotha's 1929 verdict that the silent version was infinitely better by virtue of 'the action having its proper freedom.'

It is hard, in the post-Bazin era, to see the issues so simply. As spectators, we have more 'freedom' watching the sound sequence, our perceptions being less rapidly and ruthlessly directed; so do the actors. Hitchcock, however, operates more freely in the silent. Overall, the studio scene in the sound version is much longer and slower. From the couple's entry to Alice's catatonic exit after

stabbing the man in self-defence is a little over nine minutes in the silent, nearly fifteen in the sound. Silent: 48 shots at an average length of 11½ seconds. Sound: 36 at 24½ seconds. When the characters converse at any length, or sing, movement stops, and cinematic time (constructed and compressed by editing) gives way to real time. Juxtaposing silent and sound at such points is like looking from *The Manxman* (Hitchcock's last silent-only film, 1928) to *Juno and the Paycock* (his first 100 per cent talkie, 1930). Oddly, Hitchcock came to disown both these transitional works with equal vehemence as being not only too deferential to their sources (Hall Caine's novel, Sean O'Casey's play) but also, in formal terms, doomed to rapid obsolescence: a silent released into a market already sound-crazy, and a defiantly 'primitive' talkie.

Whatever it may have come to represent for its maker, *The Manxman* enacts very precisely his theories of 'pure cinema', showing off an exhilarating mastery of the silent medium via point of view, integrated symbolism, and the drawing of the spectator 'inside the action'. *Juno* is primitive in the way that early cinema and early TV drama are primitive: it lacks that free and fluid manipulation of space and time that the classical system accustoms us to. Scenes normally proceed without ellipses, in a palpable 'real time' that can be oppressive but is at the same time curiously attractive. Primitive sound cinema often recalls the tableau style of those early silents made before the codes of framing

and cutting that came to seem so natural—in Noël Burch's term, the Institutional Mode of Representation—had been constructed. Early sound cinema of course knows these codes but is inhibited in its use of them by the technology of the time. Hitchcock put it crudely: 'We couldn't cut sound in those days.'

Literally, you could not cut sound-on-disc (the system used by *The Jazz Singer*), only re-record on to a new disc; sound-on-film (the system available to Hitchcock at BIP's Elstree studio) could, obviously, be spliced one piece to another, but the join was too audible to be considered acceptable within a scene. So the working rule was for a dialogue scene to be recorded on one continuous track which would not subsequently be cut. Visual cuts within the scene could be done in one of two ways: (1) by shooting with a second camera simultaneously and editing in such a way as to maintain exact synchronisation, i.e. with no overlap or ellipse at the cut; or (2) by cutting in mute shots, filmed separately but of exactly the right length. The film of *Juno*, respecting the play's structure and dialogue, adheres closely to this model. Most scenes are shot with two cameras which, in the manner of continuous electronic TV, observe and record from outside (and from a particular side rather than all sides), and which seldom penetrate the space between the characters. Average shot length is very high, 24 seconds. (*Blackmail*: 9 seconds silent version; 11½ seconds sound.)

While in the dialogue scenes of *Blackmail* the technical constraints are clearly





Sequence 2

the same as in *Juno*, they can't dominate the film in the same way, for obvious reasons: both the attitude to the stage original, and the circumstances of shooting, are very different. Sometimes Hitchcock observes the dialogue 'rules', creating protracted slow scenes; sometimes he breaks them, creating audible jolts on the soundtrack. Part of the film's interest, thrown into relief by the comparison with its silent twin, is that it functions as an anthology of possibilities; to adapt another Noël Burch phrase (he used it of Edwin S. Porter's work) it is a Janus film, looking back and forward.

Of the leading couple, Anny Ondra is Hitchcock's supreme silent star (*The Manxman*), John Longden his dominant early sound star (*Juno*, *The Skin Game*). She represents the subjective, he the objective; she film, he stage. She, to hide her accent, has lines spoken for her off-camera; he declaims straightforwardly and stolidly. But the Janus comparison is perhaps misleadingly simple. In the long term Hitchcock will retain and rework both elements in the antithesis. The ponderous real-time quality of the dialogue scenes in *Blackmail* and *Juno* will progressively loosen up as sound cutting is simplified, yet Hitchcock will come to seem almost nostalgic for it (*Rope*, *Under Capricorn*). At the same time, Anny Ondra will be the precursor of later heroines. And the most prophetic aspect of the twin *Blackmails* is the sustained ingenuity with which disparate styles, and disparate fragments of film, are brought together in a process of small-scale and large-scale montage.

Alice, after stabbing the artist and wandering the streets all night, returns home just in time to be 'woken' for breakfast. The soundtrack carries important dialogue between mother and daughter, and a canary sings piercingly. The silent set (fig 9) is retained for the sound re-staging (fig 10); the canary's cage is added (just out of frame right in the still) and a large chest of drawers cum dressing table appears on the left. To make herself up at the mirror, Alice has walked across from the bed, from right to left as we look; in the silent, however, she has walked direct into camera (fig 11) and 'through' to the dressing table, which here occupies the reverse space (fig 12). Typically, for sound the space has become more 'theatrical', the camera adapting the place of the theatre's fourth wall and standing front-on to the action. Equally typical, though, is Hitchcock's resourceful editing. Though organised differently in spatial terms, the two versions of the sequence have several shots in common, e.g. a picture of the police-

man boyfriend (John Longden) that hangs (somewhere) on the wall (we see it only in inserts). In the silent, Alice looks from the mirror up to her right (fig 13); cut to an eyeline shot of the picture (fig 14). In sound, Alice looks up left (fig 15), and the same picture, identically framed and angled, obediently meets her eyeline.

This process of ingenious patching and stitching is unobtrusively at work all the time. The two long central sequences—in the artist's studio, and in the White family shop, to which the blackmailer comes—are extraordinary blends of dialogue footage with (dubbed over) silent footage, creating a new composite space; to have access to the silent film is to see this process the more clearly. The way in which the appearance and disappearance of the piano (a prop added, like the canary in the bedroom, for the sound re-shoot) is masked, as Hitchcock economically stitches sound and silent footage together, would make a study in itself; but it would need much more abundant illustration than there is space for here. ▶



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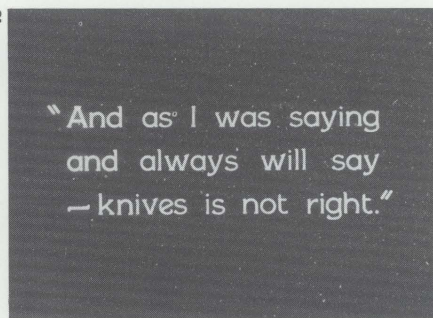
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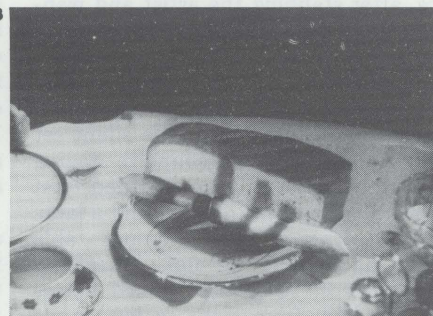
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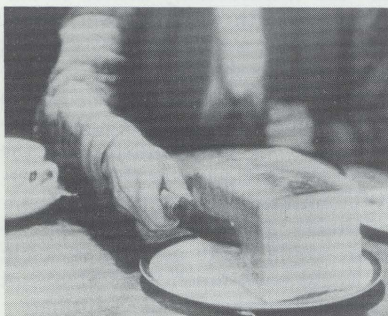
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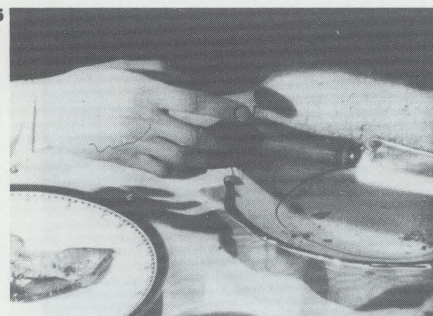
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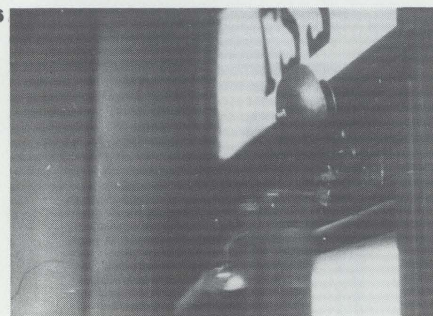
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Sequence 3

Knife!—the most celebrated soundtrack word in *Blackmail*, and probably in all cinema. At breakfast, a neighbour talks obsessively about the newly discovered murder, and the weapon used.

Sound: Phyllis Monkman as the gossip (fig 16). The camera has panned from Alice to her as she talks, and now it pans back (fig 17). Cut closer (fig 18): the woman's voice becomes a blur apart from the sharp repetitions of 'knife'. Father, off-screen, asks Alice to cut a slice of bread: tilt down (fig 19). At the next and loudest 'knife', Alice jerks the breadknife in the air; her father rebukes her and picks it up (fig 20).

Silent: Phyllis Konstam as the gossip (fig 21). Title (fig 22). Alice's hand reaches for the breadknife (fig 23). Close-up of Alice (fig 24); her hand on the knife (fig 25); a customer enters the shop and the bell rings (fig 26). At this noise, she jerks the breadknife in the air; her father will pick it up (fig 27).

These stills hardly need a commentary. Same set, new placement of characters, new casting of the neighbour. (Ironically, Phyllis Konstam features in the visual collage advertising the sound *Blackmail*, though she appears nowhere in that film.) Three shots in the sound version do the work of six in the silent, but the camera, as often, is more rather than less mobile in sound, compensating thereby for the technical problems involved in cutting.

The Times, on 14 August 1929, used the première of the silent *Blackmail* as pretext for a solemn anti-talkie editorial. Of *Blackmail* specifically: 'The comparison is much in favour of the silent version.' In general: 'The talkie is an unsuitable marriage of two dramatic forms... We cannot believe that it will endure.' But already, 'knife' and similar effects (the reverberating doorbell soon after) were reconciling the critics and even the Film Society intelligentsia to sound at the same time that the film's commercial success was reassuring the British industry. The visual expressionism of the dark shadow on the bread was matched, even transcended, by aural expressionism, and the visual close-up of the bell yielded pleasingly to aural close-up. The sound version, here as elsewhere, was no less 'inside' its heroine's consciousness. In November of the same year Sybil Thorndike told *Picturegoer* that 'the talkie tears away the last shreds of phantasy and only leaves cut and dried fact.' Whatever else the comparison between the two films of *Blackmail* reveals, it does not really support that judgment. ■

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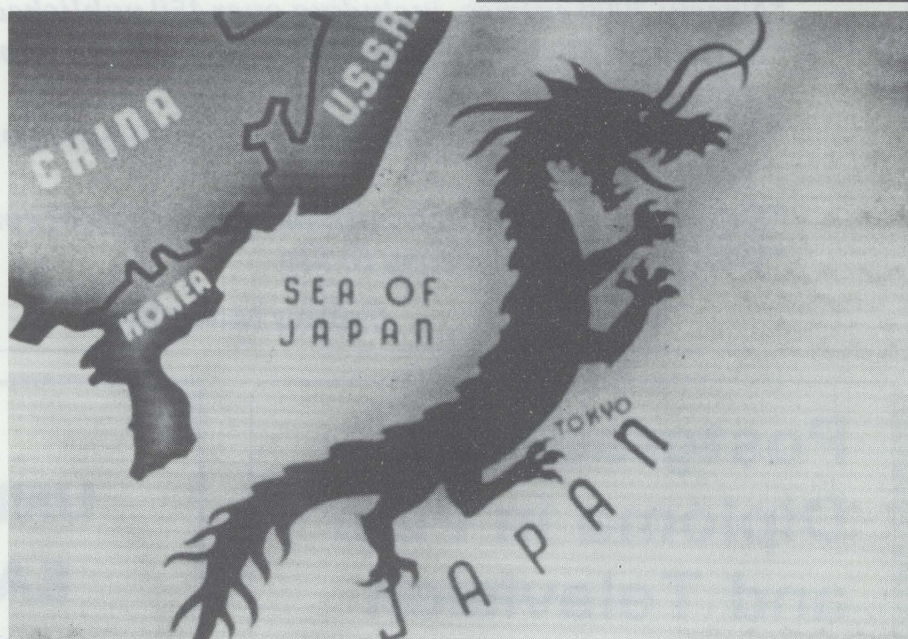
A WAR WITHIN

The making of Know Your Enemy—Japan

Before he joined the US Army in 1942, Frank Capra thought that documentaries were 'films about polar bears sliding on their asses down mountainsides.' On the surface at least, the director of *It Happened One Night*, *Mr Smith Goes to Washington* and *Lost Horizon* seemed to have little in his background to prepare him to produce the documentary *Why We Fight* series—the centrepiece of the Army's troop indoctrination programme. Yet the seven-episode series was to become one of the most successful works of film propaganda produced by the US government during the war. *Why We Fight* was required viewing for all American soldiers going overseas, and eventually was seen by millions in civilian theatres. And while Capra's attitudes toward the documentary may have been tinged with disdain (if not outright contempt), his proven ability to articulate the beliefs, values and aspirations of ordinary Americans made him the ideal choice to explain US involvement in the war to a nation just emerging from the cocoon of isolationism.

The first of the *Why We Fight* series, the Academy Award-winning *Prelude to War*, established a style that characterised most of Capra's wartime work: lengthy voiceover narration, rapid montage, stirring music and dramatic animation sequences created by Walt Disney Productions. The Capra documentaries were in essence compilation films that used newsreels, captured enemy footage and other stock film sources as their raw material. Visually, they resembled the *March of Time*—a form that had been fully developed during the 30s. It was primarily their narration that bore the distinctive mark of their creator. Capra's films relied upon simple, homely phrases that neatly summarised geopolitical complexities. Thus, the Axis powers in *Prelude to War* became merely 'gangsters' and 'stooges' whose actions could be described in typical Capra wording: 'No matter how you slice it, it was just plain old-fashioned militaristic imperialism.'

Thanks to the sponsorship of Army Chief of Staff George C. Marshall, Capra



This Disney map of Japan was first used in 'Prelude to War'.

established his own motion picture unit within Special Services—the 834th Photographic Signal Detachment—relatively isolated from the interference of career officers in the Army's Signal Corps. Even within Special Services, however, he was never totally free from pressures to make his films conform to official policy. By joining the Army, Capra had surrendered two of the prerogatives he had earned as a director in Hollywood: his name above the title of the film (War Department films had no credits) and complete artistic control. Further, as his talent for administration was recognised in the Pentagon, he gradually was less involved in the creation of individual films, becoming more producer than film-maker.

During the summer of 1942, the 834th Photographic Signal Detachment was transferred from Washington, DC, to its new headquarters—the abandoned Twentieth Century-Fox studios in Los Angeles. Capra felt that this was where the unit properly belonged, and the

advantages gained through proximity to other Hollywood production centres seemed obvious. Within a few weeks Capra had established his own tightly run studio, manned by top Hollywood professionals and other creative people. At various times the unit would include directors Anatole Litvak and George Stevens; writers Anthony Veiller, Eric Knight, James Hilton, Robert Heller and William L. Shirer; editors Merrill White and William Hornbeck; composers Dmitri Tiomkin and Alfred Newman.

Major (soon to be Colonel) Capra brought to his new job the same driving ambition that had marked his career in Hollywood. It was clear that he envisaged the 834th Photographic Signal Detachment as a major production centre, and the *Why We Fight* series as only one of many projects the unit would undertake. One of these was to be a film series entitled *Know Your Enemy, Know Your Ally*, which in terms of sheer size had the potential of eclipsing even *Why We Fight*. In a memorandum of 1 May 1942,





Soldiers: 'As much alike as photographic prints off the same negative.'

Capra outlined the scope of the films: 'This series will be devoted to explaining the geography, the people, the aims and objectives both of our allies and of our enemies. Each nation will be taken apart and attempts will be made to show what makes them tick. Enemy propaganda has confused our thinking. It is intended to divide us and make us distrust each other. This series is intended to counteract that, to show up our enemies, and to make us understand our allies. The importance and necessity of this series of pictures cannot be overestimated.' Capra went on to suggest that episodes of the series would eventually deal with Japan, England, Russia, China, Italy, Germany, Canada, Australia, Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Central America, Mexico, France, India and the Exiled Free Nations.

According to Capra, *Know Your Enemy*, *Know Your Ally* was not treated as a first priority by his Pentagon superiors. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine how a series so broadly conceived as to have separate episodes about such relatively minor contributors to the war effort as Argentina, India and Chile could have elicited much enthusiasm in Washington (and, in fact, by September 1944 all but three of the films had been cancelled). But beyond this, Capra had unwittingly set in motion the production

of a film that would be one of his unit's great failures: *Know Your Enemy—Japan*. The project was to engage the 834th in controversy with the Pentagon for the duration of the war, at a cost that would eventually exceed \$120,000. With painful slowness the film was readied for release while, simultaneously, totally unrelated events taking place in the small New Mexican town of Los Alamos would ensure its final demise.

Capra's intention seems to have been that each of the films in the *Know Your Enemy*, *Know Your Ally* series would draw upon the experiences of experts having personal knowledge of the countries portrayed. *Know Your Ally—Britain* was written by Englishman Eric Knight, and Ernst Lubitsch began production on *Know Your Enemy—Germany* (eventually to be completed by others and released as *Here Is Germany*). The first script for *Know Your Enemy—Japan*, dated 5 June 1942, was written by Warren Duff while the Capra unit was still in Washington, DC. It is not clear what expertise Duff may have had about Japan, since he was not known by anyone who later came to the project. Duff's scenario was surprisingly well developed for a first effort and managed to introduce several of the basic themes that

The 'Know Your Enemy' team



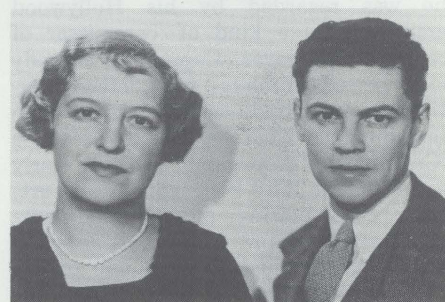
Major Frank Capra (1942)



Joris Ivens



John Huston



Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett



Helen van Dongen



Carl Foreman and Irving Wallace

would find their way into the final film: the violent history of the Japanese, their blind devotion to the Emperor, the atrocities committed against other nations, the regimentation of contemporary Japanese society and their imitation of other cultures. Whatever virtues the Duff script might have possessed, its heavily rhetorical style was more suited to John Ford's wartime documentaries than to Capra's ('We didn't bother about your way of life because it was none of our business. But now we're interested and we're going to bother quite a bit—because you're our enemy. We think we'll surprise you'). In any event, the Duff scenario was shelved, ending active work on the film for nearly a year.

When official permission to proceed with production of *Know Your Enemy—Japan* was received in the spring of 1943, Capra hired as its producer the Dutch film-maker Joris Ivens, who was teaching at the University of California at Los Angeles. Ivens brought with him an impressive background in documentary that ranged from his expressionist *The Bridge* (1928) and *Rain* (1929) to the politically leftist films for which he was best known: *Borinage* (1933), *New Earth* (1934), and *Spanish Earth* (1937). He had also photographed portions of the Japanese invasion of China for *The Four Hundred Million* (1938), a fact which itself may have brought him to Capra's attention. Yet the decision to hire Ivens seems a rather strange one since, after all, he had never been to Japan and had little first-hand knowledge of Japanese culture or history (Ivens suspected that he was regarded by his Hollywood employers as a kind of 'commissar of reality'). Moreover, Capra had already experienced problems with leftist politics, having fired several writers who had included what he considered to be 'Communist propaganda' in an early script for the *Why We Fight* series. Certainly, the pairing of the politically conservative Capra with the politically radical Ivens must rank as one of the more unlikely alliances to be forged during the war.

Upon Ivens' arrival at the 834th, he was assigned a young private to be his writer, Carl Foreman (who, after the war, would write *High Noon*, *The Bridge on the River Kwai*, *The Guns of Navarone*, etc). He shared with Ivens a general lack of knowledge about the Japanese, and both men sought to learn more through study and by viewing hundreds of hours of newsreels and captured enemy footage that would eventually comprise the film. To assist in the preliminary assembly of this material, Ivens hired his former editor, Helen van Dongen, who arrived at the 834th in June 1943. Together with two Japanese translators, Ivens, Foreman and van Dongen began the arduous process of screening and shot selection, with an eye towards developing a workable scenario. Initially, scripts were written simply outlining the basic ideas to be covered, with only a general idea of the kinds of shots at hand. When suitable shots were later found that matched the scripts, they were assembled in rough

form. Occasionally in their viewing, the team would discover unusual or particularly exciting material that sparked new ideas.

The first script written by Ivens and Foreman provided the blueprint for nearly every subsequent scenario that would be written for the film, and the ideas that would be the source of much of the controversy that would hamper its production. In their general approach they took great pains to portray the Japanese people simply as victims of a fascist military state and carefully developed a 'rogues' gallery' of military men and politicians who had created it. Their script went on to suggest that individual Japanese were in reality just like 'every-one else' when their minds were educated in the ways of freedom and democracy. This approach seems not to have been well received, and the Capra unit began looking for someone who both knew the enemy and had screenwriting experience. They found Irving Wallace, a sergeant in the Army Air Force who had been writing screen treatments for training films. Although Wallace is known today primarily as a novelist (*The Chapman Report*, *The Prize*), he had worked in Japan as a journalist before the war, writing articles for *Esquire*, *Liberty* and other periodicals. This experience would make him the only person ever to be involved with *Know Your Enemy—Japan* who had had any direct contact with Japanese society. Wallace arrived in September 1943, was handed the scripts that had been written up to this point, and then settled into long sessions of screening films with Ivens, Foreman and van Dongen.

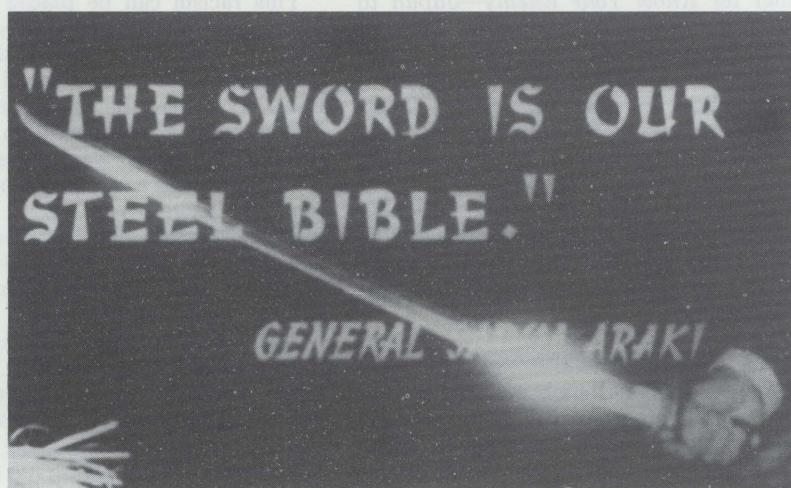
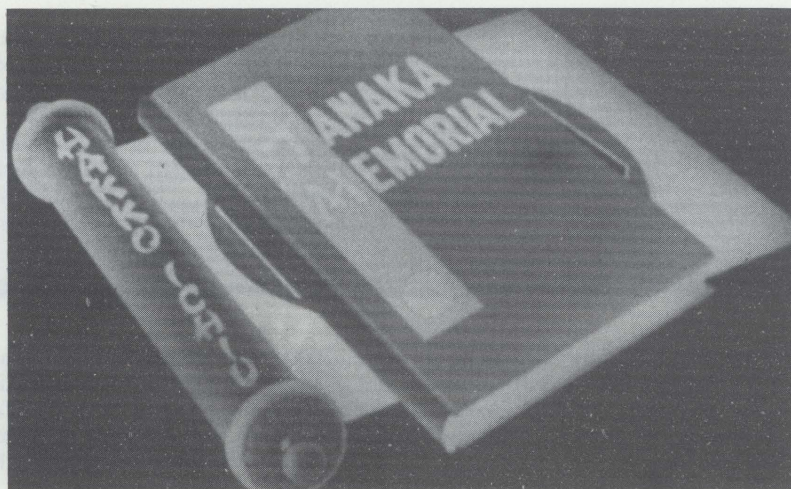
Joris Ivens abruptly left the 834th in the fall of 1943. While there have been many different accounts of the circumstances surrounding his departure, Ivens himself says he left because he was fired. He maintains that he ran into difficulties when a script he wrote for the film suggested that the Emperor of Japan was a war criminal who should be executed after the war. The script was sent to Washington for approval by Capra's superiors. It was returned with a rejection of Ivens' argument about the Emperor, and orders to Capra that he be fired immediately. Ivens has assessed the meaning of his abrupt dismissal: 'I drew the conclusion that the Americans were already busy during the war making plans to use Japan with the support of the Emperor for their imperialist politics in the Indian Ocean. At the beginning of the Second World War the American press accused me of being a premature anti-fascist—this appeared to be right.' Other members of the unit have suggested that Ivens left simply because he was unable to produce a workable scenario. Unfortunately, no records appear to have survived that could corroborate either version.

Wallace and Foreman spent the next several months writing further drafts under the supervision of Major Leonard Spigelglass, the producer of Capra's *Army-Navy Screen Magazine*. None of these drafts was deemed acceptable by



the Pentagon, and it was becoming clear that the two young writers were enmeshed in a situation from which there was no easy escape. Irving Wallace feels that their plight was the result of an inability of the War Department in Washington to define coherently a precise policy toward the Japanese. 'From FDR to General Marshall down, no one knew what to tell the troops about who their real enemy was. Some felt that the only good Jap was a dead Jap and condemned a whole race of people as the enemy (as Colonel Capra believed). Others felt the enemy was the Emperor. Still others believed Tojo and the military clique were the real enemy... There were periods when there was a policy vacuum, and in fact Foreman and I were left alone to design what our fighting men's attitudes should be toward the Japanese. Then a new producer would be appointed, filled with new directives from the War Department, and we would have to start the writing all over again.'

Wallace was particularly concerned about surveys undertaken by the Army showing that 58 per cent of the GIs in the European Theatre and 42 per cent in the Pacific Theatre believed peace could only be achieved by killing all Japanese. This idea, Wallace stated in a memorandum to Capra, was both 'dangerous and fantastic'. Echoing the stand taken in the Ivens script, Wallace went on to argue



'Know Your Enemy—Japan': stockshot samurai; a Disney sequence animating imperialist ambitions; quotations from rightwing leaders.

the importance of making a clear distinction between the Japanese people and their militaristic leaders. For Wallace, the most immediate obstacle to presenting the Japanese in a more sympathetic light was Frank Capra himself, who insisted on promulgating views that Wallace could only regard as racist. The writer gradually came to perceive Capra as a man with great sensitivity towards the 'little guy', who was unable to extend these feelings (in a larger political sense) to people of other races. In fairness, however, it is far from clear to what extent Capra was expressing his own feelings, or whether he was simply transmitting orders given to him by Washington.

In the first months of 1944, work on *Know Your Enemy—Japan* had come to a complete halt. Irving Wallace was temporarily assigned to work on episodes of the *Army-Navy Screen Magazine* and the final chapter of the *Why We Fight* series, while Carl Foreman was transferred to the Signal Corps Photographic Centre at Astoria, Long Island. Helen van Dongen departed the unit in February when told that *Know Your Enemy—Japan* was 'discontinued' as the result of a policy shift. It is difficult now to assess whether the film had in fact been officially cancelled, or simply had expired temporarily through inertia. The latter seems more likely if we read Capra's

letter of 25 February 1944, to his superior, Major General F. H. Osborn, Director, Morale Services Division: '*Know Your Enemy—Japan* is a picture which we should absolutely make. We have a great deal of film on this subject and the lack of general information on Japan itself is so appalling that we would be derelict in not doing something with this film ... *Know Your Enemy—Japan* and *Know Your Enemy—Germany* are on the list to be made and have been officially approved. What I am asking for now is that you insist they be completed providing you agree they should be made in the first place ...'

Permission to proceed with *Know Your Enemy—Japan* was quickly forthcoming, and a new producer was assigned—Edgar Peterson, a civilian with a documentary film background who had been a production assistant with the 834th since its formation in Washington. It was clear, however, that several other films had higher priority, allowing Peterson and Wallace little time to work on the Japan film. Their first effort, dated 28 April 1944, was a brief 17-page synopsis which merely incorporated many of the ideas developed earlier.

Perhaps to bring a new approach to the film, Capra briefly hired the civilian screenwriting team of Albert Hackett and

Frances Goodrich (later to write *It's a Wonderful Life* with him). In May 1944, they produced an ambitious 44-page script that expertly synthesised much of what had gone before. But, more important, this script is the first that can be called a fully realised antecedent of the final film. While later scripts would introduce new thematic elements, Hackett and Goodrich gave the film its style and, ultimately, much of its language as well. One of their script's highlights (not used in the film) was a restrained ending that was similar to the earlier positions taken toward Japanese militarism: '... As surgeons, without hatred, we must eradicate this evil cancer of brutal, stupid war loving militarism that has caused the peoples of the world so much pain. And out of the bitterness and humiliation of crushing defeat, our hope is that the people of Japan will accept their rightful place among the peace loving peoples of the world.'

Wallace and Peterson resumed their collaboration until January 1945, when Major John Huston replaced Peterson as producer. Huston, who had recently returned from Italy after completing *The Battle of San Pietro*, was assigned to the project only long enough to write a portion of a single script with Wallace. This uncompleted script dealt rather heavily with Japanese history, and had little in common with previous efforts (or the final film). Ironically, despite Wallace's stated abhorrence of racism, the script describes the Japanese soldier in the most racist terms imaginable: 'He is pigeon-toed and perhaps bowlegged. He is near-sighted and he has buck teeth.' This was to be deleted from the shooting script.

The following month saw a marked increase of activity on the film. The impending collapse of the Third Reich had turned official attention more strongly toward the Pacific Theatre, undoubtedly making the Japan project a higher priority. A 44-page script (28 February 1945) was sent to the Pentagon for approval, along with a rough cut of the film. This scenario contained nearly all the ingredients that would comprise the final narration. At its centre was a detailed historical chronology that attempted to draw direct parallels between ancient Japanese imperialist ambitions (Hakko Ichiu), and the contemporary 'blueprint for world conquest' as expressed in the Tanaka Memorial. These modern ambitions, the script maintained, have been inculcated into the Japanese soldier from birth, and it is for this reason that 'treachery, brutality, rape and torture are all justified if used against non-Japanese.'

Reactions to this hard-hitting scenario were largely favourable, but even here the Pentagon voiced concern that the script generally created 'too much sympathy for the Jap people'. As a result, Capra personally made several revisions that tended to erode many of the ideas included by earlier writers. First, the pervasive influence of the militarists upon Japanese domestic and foreign policy was downplayed, and a lengthy

More than a dozen draft scenarios were eventually written for 'Know Your Enemy—Japan'. These evolving scripts were filled with generous portions of the xenophobia present in American society, together with many fanciful notions that appear to have been the invention of the writers. The majority of these ideas perhaps were too absurd for even the most naive audiences to accept, and were not used in the final film. Here are a few examples:

'... Emperor Hirohito, with his three dollar wristwatch and his mended shorts, is only a human being, a stooge and a front man used by his Fascist government. Actually, Hirohito is more interested in golf and biology than playing God... but it's a good job with good hours, and he doesn't want to lose it.'—5 July 1943

passage providing the names of these 'Hakko Ichiu gentlemen' was eliminated. Secondly, an attempt was made to associate the Japanese *people* with militarism by adding such lines as '... they feel themselves as soldiers with a divine mission.' Finally, direct references to 'free thinking' Japanese who might not be willing to conform to their government's edicts were all but eliminated. Allowed to stand were characterisations of their society as 'an obedient mass with but a single mind.' In reference to the Japanese soldier, Capra himself added what was later to become one of the most quoted lines in the film: 'He and his brother soldiers are as much alike as photographic prints off the same negative.'

The final shooting script (21 April 1945) was fashioned almost entirely from the material revised by Frank Capra, although subtle changes were made later to remove further ideas that might prove sympathetic to the Japanese. The precise authorship of this scenario is uncertain, for during this period Irving Wallace was transferred to another project away from the unit. His departure was not a completely happy one, as he described in *The Sunday Gentleman*: '... Colonel Capra, in submitting the list of credits to Washington, DC, omitted my name completely, giving full credit instead to several well-known civilian writers who had played only a small role in the backbreaking policy effort. There was no appeal—nor should there have been, considering what other young men had done for their country without credit. But it was irritatingly amusing to know how Hollywood standards carried over into the Army, where most of my group ... lived a schizoid existence, half the time playing soldier and half the time playing Hollywood producer or director or screenplay writer ... And yet all of us felt guilty about the real soldiers far away, who were suffering and dying on Iwo Jima or at Anzio, and who were unlikely to be helped one damn bit by our films.'

During May and June, *Know Your Enemy—Japan* was assembled into its official 63-minute release version with narration spoken by Walter Huston, John Beal and Anthony Veiller; animation sequences by Walt Disney Productions; and a musical score by Dmitri Tiomkin. The film was immediately sent to Washington for screening by the Assistant Secretary of War, John J. McCloy. McCloy gave his approval, but ordered that an opening title be added extolling the bravery of Japanese-American soldiers in Europe for their 'gallantry against the Nazis'. It seems

fitting that this important idea, so carefully excluded from the film, would find voice (however briefly) through the intercession of someone outside Special Services.

Plans were made throughout the summer for *Know Your Enemy—Japan* to receive wide public distribution. The film was enthusiastically endorsed in Washington by the Film Review Committee of the Office of War Information. Their approval was vital to all films the War Department wished to reach a civilian audience, because the Office of War Information acted as liaison to Hollywood's War Activities Committee, which was responsible for the ultimate distribution of government films to commercial theatres.

When the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima on 6 August 1945, political events were quickly to overtake *Know Your Enemy—Japan*. By the following day, the War Activities Committee decided not to distribute the film to commercial theatres. The War Department, however, went ahead and formally released the film on 9 August. Although large numbers of prints appear to have been immediately placed in circulation to soldiers stateside, it is not known how many actually saw the film in the weeks that followed. On 28 August 1945, the following message was cabled to the Pentagon by General Douglas MacArthur's headquarters in Manila: 'After preview of new film *Know Your Enemy Japan* release to troops being withheld due to change in policy governing occupation of Japan ... Issue necessary instructions to withhold showing to all Navy personnel. Also recommend no press releases or showing to public in United States.'

Thus, three weeks after it had been formally released, the film had been eliminated as a tool of propaganda. Despite its failure to reach an audience, Irving Wallace feels that the message finally communicated by the film represented a victory for himself and the team of writers who 'overcame Frank Capra and his circle of aides to create an historic foreign policy.' But while it may be true that the film *could* have been a much more racist document than it ultimately became, we must view Wallace's victory as a highly compromised one. Clearly, in its final manifestation *Know Your Enemy—Japan* did attempt to lay much of the blame for the war at the feet of Japan's leaders. But, as a matter of emphasis, its audience was intended to believe that violence was innate to Jap-

anese culture and that war was simply a logical outgrowth of their national character. In spite of Wallace's efforts to the contrary, this message was certainly less than enlightened—and more than a little racist.

This racism can be placed in clearer perspective when we compare the portrayal of the 'Japs' here to that of the Germans in the companion film *Here Is Germany* (where the corresponding term 'kraut' was not employed). In the latter film the impression was created that the Third Reich was a huge, efficient machine that had merely run amok under the insane leadership of Hitler, Goering and Goebbels. If these leaders were eliminated, it was implied, then German society would automatically return to normal. In *Know Your Enemy—Japan*, the Japanese were perceived as *essentially* aberrant—their leaders serving only to reinforce their inborn character traits. The Japanese people were, the film asserted, 'Calm, peaceful, serene like their volcano Mt Fuji—with violent eruptions of brutal passions in between.' An early script made the distinction quite clear: 'Hitler had to impose fascism on a land that was once the home of great poets, philosophers and voices of liberty. But in Japan it was easy to turn back the clock. The hands had never really moved.'

There are, of course, many different ways in which negative racial attitudes may manifest themselves. At its most primitive, racism focuses on the outward racial characteristics of its subject as *prima facie* justification for hatred. By and large, this approach was rejected and open references to the ostensible physical characteristics of the Japanese ('bow-legged', 'buck teeth', and the like) were eliminated from the script. Nevertheless, the approach finally used, while more sophisticated, served largely to achieve the same results. The technique was essentially one of argument by stereotype. Racial epithets are unnecessary if one can trade upon popular conceptions of the Japanese as violent, cruel, fanatic and warlike.

Ironically, it may well have been the Japanese films viewed by the writers of *Know Your Enemy—Japan* that helped establish, or at least reinforce, these stereotypes for them. In *American Attitudes Toward Japan, 1941–1975*, Sheila K. Johnson observes that many of the national character studies undertaken by Western social scientists during the war relied heavily on the cinema of Japan for their observations. The result was that an element of distortion was introduced

'Halitosis is a national Japanese affliction.'—23 November 1943

'So here is your enemy—the Japanese soldier, a savage with a machine gun.'—5 July 1943

'It is a matter of record that no living nation has given civilisation so little—and taken so much.'—5 June 1942

'This fusion [of three Japanese races] has never been entirely completed, for there are two pronounced types of modern Japanese: the peasant, who is squat, sturdy, button-nosed; and the taller, thinner, long-nosed aristocrat.'—12 January 1945

'He [the Japanese soldier] wants to bow and banzai, wear a kimono and sit on the floor, visit your sister in a whorehouse and worship the Emperor, forget about union hours and free speech, and, by the way, no kissing. He doesn't like it, for himself or for you.'—5 July 1943

through the rather untypical behaviour and outmoded values portrayed in the films. Given the less scholarly and more biased orientation of the writers of *Know Your Enemy—Japan*, we can only imagine the effect that violent samurai films had on their perceptions of the Japanese—passed along intact to the audience through scenes used in the final film. (Half in jest, Carl Foreman later complained that his screenings of Japanese period dramas 'destroyed me forever for any film about samurai'.)

This is not to imply that the writers were not completely conscious of their ability to edit and manipulate the portrait presented of the Japanese. Their scripts usually supplied specific instructions to the film editors such as 'use the most fantastic Shinto stuff we have available.' Every society is, to outsiders, at its most 'fantastic' in appearance while at worship and the editors were quick to take full advantage of this. In general, the film became a pastiche of images that would seem the most immediately alien or threatening to western audiences: sword ceremonies, gongs, sumo wrestling, battling samurai, fierce shoguns, etc. Images that showed a modern Japan—urban society, the arts, industrialisation, non-martial sports, family life—were usually relegated to the cutting room floor.

Further distortions were introduced to the film through its attempts to establish Japan as an aggressively imperialist and violent society throughout its entire history. The technique used was not one of outright untruth (although there were some of these, to be sure), but rather one of selective omission. The film fails to mention, for example, the fact that before the 19th century Japan had engaged in episodes of foreign military adventurism only twice (a number far exceeded by the major European powers who, by that time, had established vast colonial empires through the use of military might). Similarly, the expulsion of Christianity from Japan in the 17th century is portrayed as the action of war lords who were afraid of a religion that 'dignified the lowly serfs'. Not mentioned is the fact that during this period the Catholic Church had begun seriously meddling in Japan's internal affairs, even to the point of aiding her enemies.

Although in portraying the modern history of Japan the film is somewhat more accurate, there are problems here as well. Most dramatic is the invocation of the Tanaka Memorial as Japan's *Mein Kampf*—a modern blueprint to conquer the world. Had the film's writers taken

the trouble to consult a reputable Asian scholar about the matter, they would have discovered that the Tanaka Memorial was (and is) regarded by most historians as a fraudulent document that had been invented by the Chinese to discredit Japan.

To the creators of *Know Your Enemy—Japan*, facts, like the images used in the film, were commodities to be selected and arranged for the purposes of propaganda. This approach sidestepped insights and observations that would go against the currents of audience prejudice. While this is a common practice in works of propaganda, the great danger in films like *Know Your Enemy—Japan* was that they assumed the outward form of such 'non-fiction' films as newsreels and the *March of Time*. By the outset of World War II, these films had become an important source of information about the world for many Americans, and were, however wrongly, widely regarded as truth. The danger may more properly lie, however, within the film-making process itself. Film, with its immediate relationship to physical reality, frequently succeeds in convincing us that it is 'open', exploring the world objectively for information. The manipulative hand that selects, shapes and occasionally distorts, remains hidden from view.

But while *Know Your Enemy—Japan* not only failed to say something true about the Japanese, it also neglected to impart information that could have been potentially useful to its audience. One of the major problems confronting the American soldier in the Pacific was that he did not, in fact, know a great deal about his enemy Japan. This frequently had tragic consequences for those Americans who were unlucky enough to be captured by the Japanese, with no knowledge whatever of the behaviour demanded in such situations by a rigidly hierarchical society. It is unfortunate, therefore, that the War Department did not see fit to incorporate into the film insights gained through Office of War Information studies that explored the dynamics of Japanese-American interaction. With their wide distribution and popularity, a Capra unit film containing this information might have played a part in saving many lives.

For all its shortcomings, however, *Know Your Enemy—Japan* is not without its successes—at least technically, as a work of cinema. With brilliant editing that rivals that of the *Why We Fight* series, it is a propaganda masterpiece that even today retains its power to command our attention (if not our

respect). Now that a generation of young documentary film-makers appear to move ever closer to the 'objectivity' of television journalism, one is left with the feeling that we have lost something important with the passing of this type of film. When 'balance' becomes a substitute for ideas, and 'fairness' replaces commitment, one longs at times for past eras when the makers of documentary film had something to say (no matter how wrongheaded). Certainly, in an age when the creative uses of such techniques as montage are relegated largely to the television commercial, the wartime work of Frank Capra begins to assume greater significance.

Obsolete from the day of its release, the years have not been kind to *Know Your Enemy—Japan*. The ideas expressed about the Japanese, frozen in time, make us aware of how transitory the passions of war are, and how quickly our one-dimensional stereotypes can be replaced (if only by ones that are more complex). If the Japan film permits us any emotional response today, it is simply surprise at how intelligent men could be required, even for purposes of propaganda, to take such a narrow and mean-spirited approach to an entire race of people. In viewing the propaganda of a past age, we may take some comfort from the realisation that American attitudes towards the Japanese have changed dramatically during the years since the war. Yet, as Japan emerges as America's chief economic rival during the last quarter of the 20th century, the hostility expressed by many Americans reminds us that these earlier attitudes are far from dead. The dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima may have eliminated *Know Your Enemy—Japan* as a tool of propaganda, but it did not eliminate the ideas it contains. ■

The author would like to express his gratitude to those who shared their memories of Know Your Enemy—Japan: Frank Capra, Helen van Dongen, Carl Foreman, Theodor Geisel, Joris Iuens, Leonard Spigelgass and Irving Wallace. Gratitude is also owed to David Culbert, Robert Kolker and Marlene Mayo for their time and assistance. Unpublished sources consulted include the Records of the Office of the Chief Signal Officer and the Records of the Office of War Information held by the National Archives and Records Service, and the Irving Wallace Collection held by the University of Texas, Austin. Aside from those cited, published sources consulted include An Historical and Descriptive Analysis of the 'Why We Fight' Series by Thomas William Bohn, Irving Wallace: A Writer's Profile by John Leverence and The Name Above the Title by Frank Capra.

Richard Combs on Nicolas Roeg's *Eureka*

A miner and his daughter

**'I wanted the gold, and I sought it:
I scrabbled and mucked like a slave.
Was it famine or scurvy—I fought it;
I hurled my youth into a grave.
I wanted the gold and I got it—
Came out with a fortune last fall—
Yet somehow life's not what I thought it.
And somehow the gold isn't all.'**

Robert W. Service, *Spell of the Yukon*

**'... I cannot accomplish my purpose
without first counting and weighing all
the atoms in the Universe and defining
the precise positions of all at one
particular moment. If I venture to
displace, by even a billionth part of an
inch, the microscopical speck of dust
which lies now on the point of my
finger, what is the character of that act
upon which I have adventured? I have
done a deed which shakes the Moon in
her path, which causes the Sun to be no
longer the Sun, and which alters forever
the destiny of the multitudinous
myriads of stars that roll and glow in
the majestic presence of their Creator.'**

Edgar Allan Poe, *Eureka*

Nicolas Roeg, the director who went walkabout, has made only one film—his first, *Performance*—set in his own country. Yet, with the rare exception of his latest, *Eureka*, all his films have been substantially British enterprises, financed at home, while *Chariots of Fire*, for instance, flaunts its parochial Britishness on American and Egyptian money. That double aspect of Roeg, both patently English and exotically non-English, is important in considering not only his work but his status in the native industry. Around it, rather like the mosaic pattern of one of his own films, cluster a number of related ironies. Roeg has worked in that industry, man and boy, since the late 40s, yet he still scarcely seems part of it. He has taken the mythical route from clapperboy to director, a success story which also suggests there might be an indigenous creature called the British cinema, and not just a mutant transplant that every ten years or so can be Frankensteined into life. Yet his films

have less impact than, say, *Chariots of Fire*, with the attendant hoopla which pretends it has newly minted the British cinema overnight. His films, in terms of stars, budgets and production values, are scarcely invisible, yet they go unnoticed in the yearly prize-giving jamborees that are thinly disguised exercises in national morale boosting.

The explanation, partly, is that while Roeg has been validating the notion of an organic industry, by rising through the ranks, he has also been transcending it. The hierarchy of that industry is notoriously inflexible, within a society defined by its class structure. Roeg's elevation, that heroic act of 'bettering oneself', has also been an effort to escape such definitions; he has been impatient with attempts to relate his 'vision' as a director to his previous 'job' as a lighting cameraman ('I've been put down by that many times. Oh well, he's a cameraman really. I'm not really anything. I'm not really a director. I like to do bits and





pieces'). And Roeg has escaped, more than he has rebelled. He has not exactly become an anti-establishment filmmaker—training will out, and formally he remains a craftsman, the product of a long apprenticeship, as well as an iconoclast. But he has turned a peculiar somersault, becoming an English director by first becoming an alien in his own country. Which is to say he is an 'English' director much like those 'residents' who have had to reinvent a culture for themselves rather than taking it for granted, and whose work has a strong air of self-enclosure. Think of Joseph Losey—whose stories of haunted isolates awaiting a destructive intruder are not unlike Roeg's—or of Stanley Kubrick, whose subjects are now so much made up of the director's private processes of research.

Eureka partakes of both that kind of plot and that kind of research. The inspiration of the story was a real-life figure who

already suggests Roegian inversions of nationality and identity: a gold-miner born in Maine who struck it rich in Ontario, then forsook his new Canadian citizenship to buy himself an English baronetcy and a piece of the Bahamas, where he died in mysterious circumstances in 1943. But Roeg's Jack McCann (Gene Hackman) is not given that much biographical data. He is a man who has truly fallen to earth at the moment the camera—skimming along the forests of the frozen north as if across the top of the world—first finds him at grips with his fellow man. He is struggling in the snow with another prospector, who has dared to suggest a partnership in their quest for gold, which Jack answers with his solipsistic creed, 'I never earned a nickel from another man's sweat!'

He then stumbles off into the wilderness, to make good the defiance he hurls into the very face of God: 'Jack McCann will find the gold.' That fulfilling his dream will not resolve his life, and certainly not solve his problems, might be expected as the divine comeback to this hubris. But it turns out to be not so much that as the proof that Jack is not the man alone he imagines himself to be. Or, as the gangster Mayakofsky (Joe Pesci), while trying to buy his way into Jack's Caribbean island, wittily summarises the situation, in the process dissolving the nationality riddle: 'Everyone's an American now. The Germans, they're Americans. In Chicago there's many Germans. The Japanese, believe me, one day they'll be Americans also ... This war, what is it? It's a war between Americans who all speak different languages. So how can we lose? Mr McCann is an American. He knows we're all on the same side.'

The researches of *Eureka*, having uncovered then left behind the historical roots of Jack McCann, move on to what is not Jack McCann, or to the way the world accommodates his presence, to the consequences of the microscopical speck of dust he displaces when he finds his gold. Both the poem quoted above and Poe's 'Essay on the Material and Spirit-

ual Universe' have played their part in the gestation of the film—though, like Jack's gold, their trace now goes 'diving underwater' (a different verse of Robert Service is quoted at the end). The poem is, as it were, the romance of Jack McCann, a tale of one incandescent moment of self-realisation which casts the rest of life into doubt; the Poe thesis, which argues a version of the 'Big Bang' theory of the cosmos, with all matter being dispersed by an exercise of divine will then tending inevitably to return to the unity of 'the One', is both intellectual context and a metaphor for Roeg's cross-cutting method. The result is no more an adventure story (though here, as elsewhere in Roeg, one might separate the concepts of 'adventure' and 'story', then interrelate them afresh through montage) than *The Man Who Fell to Earth* was science fiction. But in both cases, screenplays by Paul Mayersberg have allowed Roeg to expand on his own genre of the fantastic. Its poles are two propositions that might sound like the mainstays of a more conservatively (British?) realist cinema: 'all of life is here' and 'everything is connected'.

The connections *Eureka* has in mind defy any kind of realist scale—a scale obliterated at the very beginning with the fantasy of Jack finding the gold, which is both prologue and epilogue to the rest of his life. Jack, at the moment of his discovery, is a paradigm of the One, he is the lightning rod of the material and spiritual universe. This stage of his quest is attended by portents both diabolical (the barefoot man who blows his brains out in front of the claims office) and heavenly (the brain matter exploding in a shower of sparks), by moon-rock talismans and a crystal ball into which delves Frieda (Helena Kallianiotes), a madam with not so much a heart of as an instinct for gold. The ecstasy of Jack's find is translated into the ecstasy of the filming, a remarkable sequence in which Jack's wresting the mineral from the earth becomes more like communion, a fusion of obsession and landscape. Jack, one might say, is fused at this moment with his dream and the 'myriads of stars'; the world of men, however, continues to turn. Jack's identification with the natural world is also the beginning of fossilisation.

'Luna Bay is me. It is part of me,' he later declares, in the face of persistent offers from Mayakofsky, whose own dream is to grow, to expand, as Jack has contracted on the proceeds of his, ensconced on his island, his vision blasted forever by a dream come true too soon. Mayakofsky's own view of the situation is gnomic: 'I have to buy so he must sell. He must sign because we have to build.' Elsewhere, his summary of his relationship with Jack—'I have friends. I have partners. He lives on an island. We live on the mainland'—ties them further to landscape, to an ineluctable tide in the state of things against which Jack, blindly, has set his face. The fact that Jack and Mayakofsky are the two major characters who never meet, dealing

Above: the miner (Gene Hackman) and his daughter (Theresa Russell). Left: the son-in-law (Rutger Hauer) in the dock.

always through intermediaries and agents, renders the pull and push of their power plays something like the tug of the moon. The implicit irony is that the natural world comes to be identified with two such 'unnatural' men. They are most alike in their criminality. Jack has preyed on nature—'raped the earth' in the words of his resentful son-in-law. Mayakofsky preys on men. What Jack has stolen can be stolen from him.

The link between the miner and the mafioso, the prospector and the exploiter, suggests another form of the Roeg double, the Doppelgänger who has turned up in more explicitly psychological guise in *Performance* and *Bad Timing*. But *Eureka* does not really work in those terms; the pattern of relationships is again more akin to *The Man Who Fell to Earth*, to a form where 'science' and 'fiction' have cosmic implications and every character is an aspect of every other (or, in Poe's terms, all are returning to the One). If Jack, in striking into the earth, has entered the rock of ages, then the other actors in this drama are chips off the old block. Perkins (Ed Lauter), the businessman trying to steer Jack into a deal with Mayakofsky, is another species of the unwanted partner and friend Jack throws off at the beginning. Claude Maillot Van Horn (Rutger Hauer), Jack's son-in-law, is perhaps the closest to his double and opposite: Jack fears first that Claude has come for his gold, then realises that it is his soul that is in danger, given that what Claude steals is the repository both of what Jack has gained and what he is, his daughter Tracy (Theresa Russell). This erotic complicity is even reflected back, lightly, in the attachment of Mayakofsky and his daughter, a silent satellite; Mayakofsky's personable henchman Aurelio (Mickey Rourke) then becomes a threat comparable to Claude. To see these people as 'actors', transparent rather than rounded creations, again has the imprimatur of Mayakofsky who, when looking over photographs of Jack and his family, muses (in Italian), 'Six characters in search of an author.'

Reference to Pirandello perhaps a shade overemphasises the schematic element of *Eureka*. More than any other Roeg film, it is easily accessible in terms of plot—the story of a man who achieves his dream, refuses to share it, and has it forcibly taken away from him. Or rather, Roeg's characteristic cross-referencing of the plot with other material—the impulse of the anti-craftsman to expand the consciousness of what film can do, the amount of 'real' complexity it can contain—is more easily separable than before from the story. This is clearly no accident, but part and parcel of the film's design: the plot of Jack McCann, after the prologue of magical fulfilment, is a 'life story' in suspension, a time in limbo which inevitably affects all those who are drawn into Jack's orbit by the magic of what he has achieved. This time, the bulk of the film, hangs heavy; as Jack's daughter says of his eventual murder: 'He needed someone to finish him off, and

that night he found him, just as he found the gold.'

But with so much of the film taking place in suspension, there are two related dangers. One is an occasional (and unusual) sense of desiccation in Roeg's cross-cutting: for instance, from Jack's maddened assault on Claude to the opening fight in the snow with his putative partner. The other is a brittleness to the characters which renders them, Pirandello aside, creations with no real being, their relationship almost a matter of 'what if'. The elemental identification between Jack and Tracy—an attachment subsuming without touching on incest—is so complete, so much at the frozen core of Jack's life, that its antithesis, Tracy's intensely physical passion for Claude, has no play in the film, despite the frequency with which it is stated. The perfection of Roeg and Mayersberg's design here almost has—to return to real-life cases—a forbidding historical inevitability, and the act of murder to which it leads, that will release Jack and destroy his world, is Roeg *in vitro*, *in extremis*, just as *The Assassination of Trotsky* was to Losey.

The murder is, in its way, a return to the magic of the beginning: in imagery, it is just as frenzied, just as ecstatic. Its larger dimension, again, comes separate from the sequence of events that leads up to it. Finally impatient with Jack's blunt refusal to sell Luna Bay, Mayakofsky despatches Aurelio and a boatload of hoods to the island. In the midst of a storm, they confront Jack and pursue him to the fastness he has named 'Eureka'; Jack is then protractedly beaten and burned to death. The hand that does the deed, however, is not revealed; Perkins and Claude are also present in the house, and there is a kind of universal complicity in the murder, just as there was at Jack's birth, the moment of Eureka. If the murder frees its victim, the unattached guilt that goes with it spreads a more elusive contagion. Claude is tried and acquitted of the killing, and is left at the end with Tracy. But, confronting himself in a mirror (as for Losey, part of the necessary décor of self-enclosure), he repeats Jack's last words, 'I knew it would be you,' and heads out to sea. A reprise of Jack's journey through the universe of snow then ends the film.

Characters, perhaps, are not so much in search of an author as (vide *Performance*) a lost 'demon'. It is Jack's misfortune, and his destiny, that he comes to embody both. As he himself explains it: 'It's not me that they hate. It's what I represent. I'm the fellow who knew what he wanted and went out and got it. Tough act to follow.' In a way, it's a tough act also for Roeg to follow—holding an audience after the triumph of the beginning (perhaps the single most extraordinary sequence he has shot). But with the plot tucked to one side, as it were, the film can occupy itself with alternative lines of enquiry, commentary and metaphor; not so much themes as parallel 'plots'.

Intellectually, *Eureka* is Roeg's most

multifarious film—a development of something begun in *Bad Timing*. With *Don't Look Now*, his cross-referencing came disguised in a plot about extra-sensory perception; and even in *The Man Who Fell to Earth*, it had the excuse of interplanetary locations. But in *Bad Timing*, with its love story paralleled by discourses on knowing and spying, art and politics, the references begin to run not across but in a steady line through the film. *Eureka* multiplies the tendency: references to many disciplines through which people have sought a secret, attempts to unpick the universe (alchemy, numerology, voodoo, the kabbala), underlain with elemental imagery that unites them all. The earth from which Jack has plucked his own secret; the air in which his planet is suspended (a shot looking down on which Roeg casually drops in); the fire in which he will be consumed; and the water that separates his island from the mainland.

Around this scheme, Roeg has spun his own world. In its design, one might recognise other movies, strangely transmuted. If the beginning suggests an adventure story—an adventure prematurely climaxed—it is also like a Western of trail-blazing zeal and privation. The book on which the film is based (by Marshall Houts, a lawyer) is largely concerned with the courtroom niceties of the trial of the real-life son-in-law; yet Claude's trial here is set up simply as an arena for Claude and Tracy, husband and wife confronting each other in the light of the death of the father. And if Jack McCann's life literally weighs upon the earth, the film also gives it its measure, its duration, in time. Which makes it appropriate that the chief film reference should be to that pre-eminent time puzzle, *Citizen Kane*.

Eureka, the private sanctum, is Xanadu, down to the 'No trespassing' sign on its wrought iron gates. A shot of Jack, making his way at night to Frieda's cabin in a cavern, suggests a world enclosed in a Kane glass ball with its simulated snow, a bauble which turns out to exist here, and which is dropped by one of the hoods during Jack's death agony. Jack, of course, inhabits his world like a monster father figure—bursting in on Claude and Tracy, naked on their bed, as if to drive them from Eden. His megalomania is akin to Kane's, but in his non-human aspects he more closely resembles—to bring the references 'back home'—Jack Nicholson's minotaur in *The Shining*. In the end, the gates of Eureka enclose not a mad collector's folly—stocking his world with possessions to make up for his loss of love—but a state of mind rather like an out-of-season hotel, a boarding up of space and time that, paradoxically, extends both infinitely. In appearance, *Eureka* is diverse and kaleidoscopic where *The Shining* is monolithic and inscrutable; Kubrick has made himself at home in exile where Roeg has sent himself into exile at home. Both have taken the universe for their subject which, by some inversion principle of space and time, has become a haunted house of their own making. ■

Ulster paralysis

Ascendancy/John Pym

Moving images of a war that began nearly seventy years ago, preserved by the Imperial War Museum, overlaid with a delicate blue tint, heightened by a driving 80s score: the re-edited footage is, of course, familiar, unmistakable, but it still conveys a unique strangeness. The desolation of North-eastern France; a soldier standing on top of an advancing tank; a war with horses; those curious puffs which signify (*pace* Brownlow and Gill) men smoking in silent movies; the camera operator scanning the field, not knowing where the action is; the ordinariness, the casualness of men going over the top. The running figure, the silent shell burst. Nothingness. A vintage Rolls gliding towards us along a country lane, a sleeping woman passenger: her voice reveals that she is only feigning sleep, she is haunted by the memory of one of the war's victims.

The opening of *Ascendancy* (BFI), which at February's Berlin festival took the top prize, the Golden Bear, is striking for the way it takes worn images and ideas and reinvests them with cinematic life. The archive footage is edited so that disparate shots seem to be leading inexorably to a climax, the shell burst that kills (or appears to kill) the anonymous soldier. The woman with her head at an awkward angle in her mourning weeds with a black net pulled against her face is framed and posed with an authority which is hard to define but immediately apparent. She speaks with authentic bone-weariness.

The Rolls is halted at a roadblock; khaki British soldiers in unsullied tin hats look in and ask where the driver is going. 'Belfast.' They are almost Tommies. They look the parts, hold themselves as soldiers (the non-speakers do not give themselves away). But something is missing—something as indefinable as the rightness of the woman in the motorcar. This is fictional Ireland (the film was actually shot principally in the North of England), not the real Western Front, one should not expect these soldiers who are not engaged in a real war to behave like their archive counterparts. And yet, and yet... the impossibility, the futility of attempting to recreate reality.

Ascendancy, produced by the BFI in association with Channel 4, is the most ambitious and most marketable of the recent spate of Production Board films which have dealt with Ireland—and, to their credit, with an Ireland that is more than just the Troubles (1969–83). It follows the deteriorating condition of Connie Wintour (Julie Covington), who since the death of her soldier brother has been afflicted by depression and a psychosomatically paralysed right arm, during the months preceding and just after Partition. She cherishes the



'Ascendancy': The Orangeman's summer ritual.

memory of her brother for the promise he held of repudiating his Ascendancy heritage. Through the arrival in the Wintour household of a British Lieutenant (Ian Charleson), who is jaundiced at having missed the real war but who nevertheless penetrates to what lies at the heart of her sickness and then offers in vain to take her away to the false security of England, Connie in the end comes to understand that the Ascendancy is a canker not simply confined to her father's house. We last see her being kept alive with a tube down her throat.

One problem that *Ascendancy*, scripted by Edward Bennett, the director, and the playwright Nigel Gearing, partially overcomes is that of making us look at Ulster images, past and present, with new eyes. Bennett and his cameraman Clive Tickner catch certain emblematic moments with poetic clarity. Connie's nurse one sunlit day looks out at the front lawn around which the drive circles. 'Now, that's a fine sight, isn't it.' On the lawn a young man, one of the servants, his jacket off, his sleeves rolled, is twirling a large baton. 'Is it summer already?' Connie asks. And the camera closes on the man, his hard strong face registering pleasure, concentration, unstoppable determination. A shaft of light is let in on the Orangeman's summer ritual. 'Is it summer already?' coming from a woman who refers to her home as this 'terrible place', puts a melancholy seal of inevitability on the Orange parades. It seems they will go on, have gone on, for ever. And for a second we are made to see a small corner of the world from the point of view of both Connie and her nurse.

That scene speaks with eloquent economy. As do, though their method is starkly direct rather than poetically suggestive, two others in which Bennett fixes the impact if not the 'reality' of sectarian murder with the immediacy, the 80s immediacy, of that silent shell burst. His success in this respect is less

to do with the care with which two complementary sequences are edited than that with which they are framed. Two of Wintour's Protestant servants go at night to murder a Catholic; one knocks at the door, the other pulls the trigger. It's over in a second; the man in the lighted doorway crumples, we momentarily experience his wife's horror. The ritual slogan is shouted and the scene ends.

In contrast to this spare black sequence, in which we are shown the preparations for the murder, the sequence of the retaliation begins after the fatal off-screen shot has been fired. In broad daylight, in the crowded hall of the Wintour mansion, a wounded boy is brought in and laid on a table. One is struck by the futility of the bustle. He is shot through the heart and clearly finished: blood cascades from his mouth over his thrown-back face. Again it is over in a second. There is an ordinariness to this scene, something commonplace, comparable in its different way to the shot of the soldier riding into battle standing on top of the tank: it too seems bizarrely silly, one wonders for a second whether one has been deceived by one's eyes. Bennett is less successful when showing the tanks themselves. The museum armoured vehicles are wheeled out for the climax, in which Connie finds herself on the night streets of Belfast, witness to a civil disturbance, an attempt to kill a British soldier and the cold-blooded response. The vehicles look perilously insubstantial: crocks at a rally. Nevertheless, accuracy aside, action is action, and even if it is emblematic action it needs to be handled with more brio than it is here.

What Bennett, his art director Jamie Leonard and his costume designer Phoebe de Gaye excel at is conjuring the unsuspected image—the ostracised Catholic maid cutting her hand on the piece of glass buried in the bucket of dirt used for sprinkling on the floors—and in particular the suffocating atmosphere

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in the Wintour household, the scrupulous doctors out of the nineteenth century whose patient is an exhibit, a doll to be hypnotised and made to perform tricks, the choked-back emotions and neurotic tribal fears. Domestic scenes, in this respect, are less fraught with hazards than martial ones. This said, however, the film-makers do at times succeed in shaking free of the clichés that surround any attempt at putting uniformed Second Lieutenants on the screen. Here they are comfortable in their uniforms, anxious to get back to proper soldiering (fighting other men in uniform). A detachment of British soldiers is sent to protect the Wintour mansion after the retaliatory murder. They are seen at one point gathered in a relaxed painterly formation supervising the drilling of some auxiliary boys, half-uniformed, eager to sling on their bandoliers. The distance between the two groups, despite a foreshortened

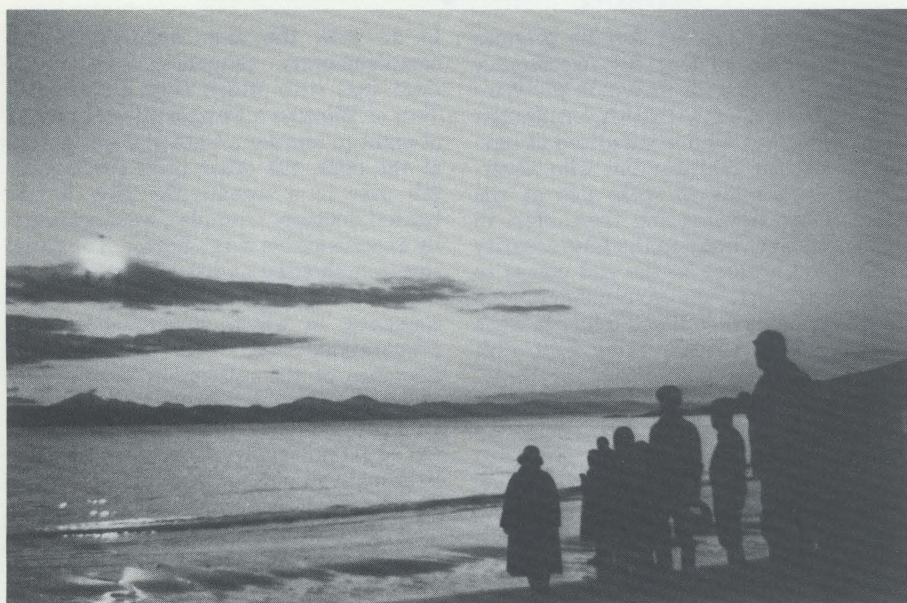
perspective, is apparent and telling with echoes reaching into the future.

Ascendancy takes its period seriously, but its strength is that in the end it is not a period film. It is also more than an English film about Ireland. It has a sense of history: sees the irony in Wintour, the shipbuilder, assuring a German buyer that he need have no fear, production will not be harmed by industrial unrest. This is Ireland on the fringe of a more powerful Europe: the 1914-18 war looms larger here (though not among businessmen) than the Easter Rising. It powerfully suggests the isolation of the Orangeman, his laager mentality: he can hold six counties, but not nine. The British do not really care: the officers are only boys, anxious for romance, to be out of the province. Coming to a party at Wintour's house, they are caught spread out on the drive in the soft evening light throwing a cap from hand to hand. □

power—almost boundless power, the power to destroy the community of Ferness. His conversion to ecological camaraderie at the end leaves untouched the threat (or the opportunity, or both) posed to Scotland by Knox Oil and Gas, and for that matter leaves suspended all the issues that Forsyth's screenplay has deftly toyed with in the first part of the film.

It is, in fact, the first half of *Local Hero* that really raises one's hopes that the British film industry has got beyond its rebirth trauma. Forsyth's screenplay and direction, Chris Menges' stunning camerawork and a series of nicely judged performances from Burt Lancaster, Peter Riegert, Denis Lawson and Peter Capaldi achieve the almost forgotten ideal of a British film that is thematically dense, deals with serious issues, is funny, has well-developed characters, can handle running gags and gives off a general sense of confident control. The roles of producer and director combine to the immense overall benefit of the film. The whizz-kid efficiency of MacIntyre (Riegert), the young Houston executive, is nicely played off against the gauche eagerness of his Scottish counterpart, Danny Oldsen (Capaldi), and the contrast is compounded by the fact that Oldsen, despite his name, is a genuine Scot while MacIntyre, despite his, is a Hungarian immigrant whose father adopted the name at Ellis Island because he thought it sounded American. The irony is given a further twist by the introduction of a black minister in the Ferness kirk (Chris Asante), with the *echt* name of Macpherson and a fairly authentic Scottish accent.

Similar hopes are raised by the two sub-plots, involving Marina (Jenny Seagrove), the oceanographer with more than a touch of the mermaid, who comes to obsess Danny; and the movements of things in the sky which is Happer's obsession and soon becomes Mac's, leading to one supreme visual joke where a light moving mysteriously through the sky turns out to be, not the expected comet that it is Happer's dream to see, but Happer himself flying in by helicopter to be ready for it. Only with the introduction of Happer's analyst, whose methods of treatment extend to obscene phone calls late at night, does one get the impression that Forsyth is striving a little too fussily for a richly textured film. In general, he manages to weave together both an acute awareness of the politics of Scottish oil exploration, and an unsentimental look at Scottish provincial life: Urquhart (Lawson), the hotel owner, is also the local solicitor, with an indication that he is 'Licensed to deal in game' affixed to his office plaque, and a taxi service for tourists in the summer. Ultimately, however, the affirmation of the superiority of the traditional culture over the money-oriented one turns out to be rather twee, if not actually apologetic. Mac, back in Houston, turns aside from his Porsche and his luxurious lifestyle to view his snapshots of Ferness and his



'Local Hero': Happer's arrival.

A light in the sky

Local Hero/Nick Roddick

There is, of course, no more certain candidate for disappointment than an eagerly awaited follow-up. And it is doubtful that many films have been more eagerly awaited than *Local Hero* (Fox): David Puttnam's first feature film production since *Chariots of Fire*, which was supposed to set the British film industry back on the road to viability, and Bill Forsyth's follow-up to *Gregory's Girl*, which raised a whole different set of hopes about British film-making. In some respects, the future of British cinema depends on its ability to merge the Puttnam tradition with the Forsyth one.

For much of its running time, *Local Hero* does the job in a way that is exhilarating to watch. The real problem comes with the appearance of the half-acknowledged ghost of another kind of cinema altogether: the ghost of Ealing.

Echoes of *Whisky Galore!* abound, both in terms of theme (a small Scottish community banding together against an outside threat, in this case the plan by an American company to buy up a village port and turn the site into an oil refinery) and in terms of incidental details and characters. But they can only serve to indicate how totally films and film audiences have changed since 1949. While *Whisky Galore!* could still make contact with a genuine sense of traditional community, *Local Hero* can only do so self-consciously: no one seems more aware of the roles that are being played than the inhabitants of the village of Ferness. And while Basil Radford's Waggett in the Ealing film was a pompous authoritarian who could be thwarted with relative ease, Burt Lancaster's Happer, the tycoon behind the deal in *Local Hero*, represents

collection of seashells, then puts through a call to the village's harbour-side red phone box.

In retrospect, it is possible to indicate the moment at which *Local Hero* dodges its commitments. During the ceilidh, the village's traditional highspot, Mac becomes progressively drunker and increasingly disillusioned with his mission. The callow ceilidh band suddenly abandons its country and western repertoire for a tin whistle lament. The camera tracks along the front of the stage, and the possibility of a triumphant tying together of all the themes is briefly glimpsed. Instead, however, we shift rather abruptly outside to the introduction of the character of the old beachcomber, Ben Knox (Fulton Mackay), who will eventually block the ambitions of his namesake oil company by sheer folksy cussedness. And the whole mixture, for all its enormous skill, topples back into the clutches of a certain kind of British cinema. Though *Local Hero* undoubtedly offers more hope than any other British film of the 1980s so far, the question of whether it is possible to merge the two traditions remains sadly open. □

Besmirched honour

Yol/Jill Forbes

There is something about Turkey which is consistently unappealing. It is reputedly a land of luxury and corruption, where the sins of antiquity flourish and pashas and slaves await the assault of romantic heroes like Byron. Whatever the accident of its geography, it is emphatically not a Western country, yet it contrives to belong to the East without being mysterious. The image of the grinning Turk's head, the scimitar and the crescent, is hard to dispel from the Western European mind, so that centuries after the Crusades it would seem that the Turk remains the Infidel.

The box-office success of *Midnight Express* has already suggested that audiences here, as elsewhere in the West, like to be comforted in their prejudices about the country. But now *Yol* (Artificial Eye), because it is one of the few Turkish films ever to be exported, adds authenticity to these conventional views and fleshes out prejudice with real-life circumstances whose impact it would be hard to gainsay.

Essentially, *Yol* describes a number of physically disparate but spiritually parallel itineraries. Its narrative pretext is simplicity itself: a group of men, imprisoned for a variety of reasons on an island in the west of Turkey, learn at short notice that they are to have a week's parole. Each sets off across country in search of family and friends and in so doing embarks on a quest for some kind of inner peace or fulfilment. At the same time, the variety of their routes,

adventures and destinations provides the occasion to portray the state of the nation.

The brevity of their furlough lends excitement and tension to the men's journeys. Travel is arduous and sometimes dangerous, and unforeseen hazards lurk round every corner ready to strike these unwary pilgrims. Communications are difficult, especially after long absences in prison, and much transport is primitive or inadequate, becoming less and less functional the further east one moves until it finally reverts to the medieval. Such things, together with the bustling squalor of the towns and the breathtaking natural landscapes, lend a spontaneity to these picturesque pilgrimages which even the sophisticated viewer responds to. Of them all, Seyit Ali has the worst of it because he must cross a blizzard-swept mountain canyon on horseback in order to retrieve his wayward wife, but his is only the most spectacular of a series of all but impossible journeys.

Turkey is under martial law. The military, however, are portrayed as ubiquitous but not especially bloodthirsty, as bureaucrats rather than the arbitrary butchers of legend, except of course on the Syrian border where the returning Omer finds half his village and his own brother dead. The soldiers' general attitude is well illustrated in the sad tale of Yusuf, designated as the comic character by his lack of stature, his shamefaced expression and the fact that he travels with a canary in a cage. Yusuf has the misfortune to lose his papers almost as soon as he is released, and is immediately re-arrested. But the worst that befalls him is that he wastes his week's leave in a cell instead of spending it with his wife. Indeed, it could be argued that the military have the law on their side, for these convicts, so far from being prisoners of conscience, have all been interned for crimes related to murder, crimes which they invariably committed as a result of poverty or ignorance, but crimes nevertheless. So that though *Yol* is quite certainly a political tale, it is not a straightforward denunciation of the Turkish regime.

Thus far it might perhaps be thought that this film offers little more than a quaint excursion down some unbeaten tracks, together with a sympathetic portrayal of the consequences of underdevelopment, in much the same vein, though more tautly and less sentimentally, as *The Herd*. But *Yol's* Cannes Grand Prix was awarded not so much for the achievement on celluloid as in recognition of the determination and charisma of Yilmaz Güney, who wrote and edited, but who could not direct the film since he was himself in prison. The director was Serif Gören. Güney's success is both personal and technical. His personal history is one of triumph against the odds, of a poor peasant's son who first became a popular actor, then a film director, and finally the incarcerated victim of a repressive regime, but who continued to

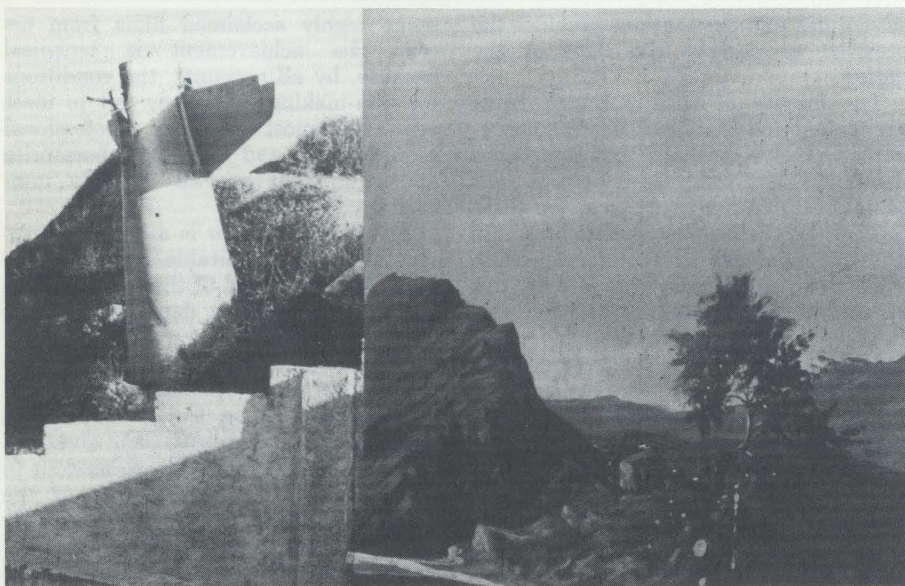
make highly acclaimed films from his cell. His achievement is technical because, by all accounts, the conditions for film-making in Turkey fail to meet even the most basic of professional requirements, and training, laboratories and equipment are all virtually non-existent.

But if *Yol's* author is a highly attractive and even admirable character, the same cannot be said of the film, which is the most profoundly depressing indictment, not so much of a political as of an ideological system. What is it that drives all these detainees when they are released from prison? It is, quite naturally, a desire to be reunited with their wives and families. But why are they so anxious to get back home? Not because of the rigours of prison life, nor because they have so long been deprived of the company of loved ones, but because of a gnawing fear that in their absence their 'honour' may have been impaired. What they are frightened of above all else is the collapse of the patriarchal order.

So it is that Seyit Ali almost kills himself in order to call his unfaithful wife to order and, incited by his own son, comes close to abandoning her to the snow and the vultures, saves her *in extremis*, only to have her die anyway from the effects of exposure. These episodes are moving, and even horrifying in the case of the attitude of the younger generation, but they might be thought melodramatic. However, the predicament of Mehmet is positively tragic, for in this instance it is *he*, not his wife, whose honour is besmirched. Mehmet deserted his brother-in-law at a crucial moment indirectly causing his death, with the result that his wife Emine's family will no longer recognise his authority. Mehmet is refused access to his children, but when he arrives on parole Emine manages to sneak them out and join him. In their personal behaviour the couple thus show great courage in the way they flout convention, but it seems that society will always catch up with them. Once aboard a train they retire to the lavatory where a fellow passenger surmises they are making love. They are denounced, hauled before the travel police and publicly humiliated, and just as they finally succeed in convincing the official that they are, indeed, married and that public morality has not been offended, they fall victim to the private vendetta waged by one of Emine's brothers who has boarded the train and shoots them dead.

Between the law of the Father and the law of the State there is thus little to choose and virtually no possibility of escape, an attitude which is the more remarkable for having been put over by a native of Turkey in a narrative form that has all the poetic inevitability of a folk tale. *Yol* commands admiration from the viewer because on one level it is so agreeable to assimilate, but it also creates a profound sense of unease precisely because it confirms what popular belief had always held to be the case about Turkey. □

FILM REVIEWS



'The State of Things': The remnants of 'The Survivors'.

9½

The State of Things/Gilbert Adair

Whoever heard of a moviemaker's 'fear of the white screen', in the sense intended by Mallarmé when he confessed to being intimidated by the accusatory blankness of a virgin sheet of paper? In fact, whoever heard of a 'director's block'? The sole recorded instance of such a condition in the cinema, Fellini's *8½*, is arguably the Maestro's best, most fabulously profuse film to date, teeming with ideas and *trouvailles* and gags, all transformed by Gianni di Venanzo's garish black and white photography into a mouth-watering jumble of liquorice all-sorts. But there cannot exist a director in the world who, if favoured with a decent budget and tolerable working conditions, would not rush headlong into pre-production planning and deliver himself of a movie in time for its baptism at Cannes the following year, whether or not he might have had anything very urgent to communicate.

For those less privileged than Fellini, a 'block' is mostly something imposed from without, by interfering producers, petty-minded moguls and insufficient funds. *The State of Things* (Artificial Eye)—by an agreeable accident, Wim Wenders' ninth-and-a-half feature, if one includes the previously completed 'half' of *Hammett*—is about such a block, with the cast and crew of a science fiction movie marooned on the Portuguese coast near Sintra, the western rim of Europe, while the director, Friedrich, apprehensively scans the horizon for a signal from their missing producer, the chimerical Gordon. As a stocktaking—so, at least, its title implies—of the medium's current status quo, in Europe as in Hollywood, it simultaneously reflects and, by virtue of its own splendid existence, belies the debilitating inertia inherent in movie-making, an inertia that it situates in a localised context (the long periods of hanging about on a film set—except that

Wenders' movie was shot over a few feverish weeks) as well as in a global one (the alarming depletion of the cinema's raw material, its main source of energy, to wit, stories worth telling—except, again, that Wenders has a vertiginously original tale to tell).

Because the interrupted film-in-progress, *The Survivors* (a remake of Allan Dwan's *The Most Dangerous Man Alive*—an amazing little thriller, by the way), is set in a desolate post-holocaust dust bowl, and, more significantly, because no matter what kind of movie is being shot, its *tournage* or shoot will always savour of science fiction, commentators on *The State of Things* have tended to interpret the hiatus in its filming, with the forced inactivity of the cast members, as an 'apocalypse' in miniature—what Nigel Andrews in the *Financial Times* termed 'the end of the world at the edge of the world'. All of which is apt enough, for if 'parallel' worlds are nothing but anagrams of our own world, the reverse ought to be true also.

But why look so far afield? *The State of Things* must strike anyone who has ever participated, be it peripherally, in the movie-making process as practically a documentary on a shoot. In *La Nuit Américaine*, with his usual charming disingenuousness, Truffaut took care to edit the shoot of his film-within-the-film, *Je vous présente Paméla* (which he himself was eventually to make as *La Femme à Côté*). Movie-making, he invited us to believe, is a *rondo furioso* of movement and light, a dizzy Ophulsian whirl of harmonious activity, in which even the performers' emotional crises can be sweatlessly integrated into the end product. It was a cheerful, harmless deceit, designed to foster the illusion that a movie takes no longer to produce than it does to watch—about two hours.

The State of Things, by contrast, is what you might call a lugubrious experience. Nothing apparently happens. The characters reminisce and take snaps and get drunk and read aloud from Alan Le May's *The Searchers* and generally mooch around. Yet, because the first challenge facing any movie (certainly, any low-budget European art movie) is that of simply *surviving* its own shoot, it too may be made to function as a source of narrative, engendering its own stars (not necessarily in the same order of billing), its own dramas, conspiracies, love affairs, rhythms, moods, even *mise en scène*, so to speak. It's the reverse side, the verso, of the tapestry—rough, clotted textures, knots as thick as clenched fists and colours running together to form a radically reorganised paraphrase of the seamless recto. And the unravelling of the original anecdote, with all the threads of its linearity hanging loose, means that it now demands to be *read*, not merely absorbed in a state of passive contemplation. In effect, the break between what we see of *The Survivors* and the hypnotic stasis that envelops the suspended shoot like a treacherously soft snowdrift is a false one. The oddly 'Japanese' goggles, masks and jumpsuits are mere movie props, sops to those spectators who cannot envision visions unless they come in an identifiably visionary style. The actors, as one of them helpfully muses, have become 'survivors' no less than were the characters they incarnated.

Friedrich, however, abruptly makes a decision. It is in LA itself that he will run Gordon to ground. A plane crawls up the sky like a fly on the ceiling. And suddenly we are plunged into a genuine 'story', involving a *film noir* cityscape, a silky lawyer (played by Roger Corman), a fleeing creditor (Gordon) in a mobile home, an equivocal relationship (Gordon and his chauffeur-cum-companion), the Mafia and, to cap it all, a shootout in a deserted parking lot (Friedrich drawing a bead on his assailant with an 8mm camera). Why, there's even an O. Henry-type twist. Gordon and Friedrich are mowed down, we understand, because *The Survivors*... was made in black and white! Having invested its laundered loot from drugs and prostitution in the lucrative glamour of the silver screen, the Mafia has unwittingly backed a black and white European art movie, for God's sake. It has been double-crossed.

The State of Things, then, is not only an allegory, a dark reflection on narrative and non-narrative, a statement of things in the art and industry of the cinema, a documentary on a shoot, a pendant to *Hammett* and *Lightning Over Water*, a homage to Dwan, Lang, Ford and Fuller, a movie that cannibalised another movie (one, precisely, about cannibalism), Raul Ruiz's *The Territory*, whose cast and crew it appropriated, it's also, and primarily, a thriller. A thriller with a moral: *O all you European directors, eyes westward, beware! Hollywood will make you an offer you can't refuse.* □

At the house of the Ekdahls

Fanny and Alexander/John Pym

Ingmar Bergman has declared that *Fanny and Alexander* (Artificial Eye) is to be his last film. There have, it should be noted, been previous last performances, and we shall have to wait and see whether this is absolutely and positively the not-so-old Magician's last trick. If, however, it is, he could hardly have executed a more smiling, confident and sweeping valedictory bow. The proceedings open on Christmas Eve 1907 in an unnamed Swedish provincial town (there is, it transpires, a theatre, a cathedral, a university, a dark rushing river). Our hero, ten-year-old Alexander Ekdahl, is gazing dreamily through the proscenium of a toy theatre. We are then introduced to the sumptuous apartment of Alexander's grandmother: the imagined, enclosed, ideal home of childhood. It is unmistakably framed as another theatre. The empty stage is soon awash with revelry: for sustained exuberance, as well as for a fluid grace suggesting space and liberating movement, Bergman has never done better. After the years of exile, one can hear the exhalation. The film-maker is back home among his own people, happy in his own *petit théâtre*.

Fanny and Alexander, like *Scenes from a Marriage*, comes in two versions. The one under review, for theatrical release, is divided in two and runs some three hours. Bergman published a *Fanny and Alexander* script in Sweden in 1979, and Alan Blair's translation (Pantheon Books, New York) is a useful adjunct to the film since a prologue supplies some essential background detail to this many-charactered family story. It also reveals that one seemingly important scene has been dropped (if it was ever shot) from the theatrical version. (*Scenes from a Marriage* lent itself reasonably well to television, but it is hard to imagine that Sven Nykvist's rich, crowded images for *Fanny and Alexander* will transfer as happily.) One finds in the script's stage directions confirmation of two of the film's striking aspects: Bergman's desire to speak plainly and his taste—some may have forgotten it—for sly humour. We are allowed at one point to hear the voice of God: Alexander hears it too and speaks up for himself—this God, it turns out however, is only a large misshapen puppet.

In the first part, Bergman is concerned with establishing the feeling of a child, Alexander (Fanny hardly gets a look in), cocooned in the middle of a sprawling, prosperous, close and on the whole greatly good-humoured Swedish family. Helena (Gunn Wållgren), is the family matriarch; she is flanked by Isak Jacobi (Erland Josephson), her confidant and discreet lover, and her three sons, the wan Oscar, the actor-manager of her late husband's theatre, Carl, an embittered second-rate academic, and Gustav Adolf

(Jarl Kulle), an ebullient businessman and restaurant-proprietor. Swimming around this centre is a host of wives, children, theatre people and servants, the latter both young and old being treated by Bergman with particular fondness. By the time Christmas is over they have firmly established themselves: one wants to know about them.

Oscar—and the script but not the film makes clear that his children Fanny and Alexander are not his own—subsequently dies. He collapses during a rehearsal of *Hamlet* and is to return from time to time in the guise of the Ghost of Hamlet's Father until Alexander, in exasperation, finally sees him off. Oscar's beautiful widow, Emilie (Ewa Fröling), remarries the town's dour Bishop Edvard Vergérus (Jan Malmström). At this point, the action shifts into a more starkly melodramatic key. Life in the Bishop's palace is unadulterated misery and it is time for the sorcerer, here Isak, a kindly old party with a mysterious antique shop, to come into his own. In a wonderful piece of sleight-of-hand, playing the Old Jew to the hilt and infuriating the anti-semitic Vergérus, he spirits the children from the palace in a chest which he has agreed to purchase from the out-of-pocket Bishop.

Vergérus is as nasty and hypocritical a piece of work as any Bergman has put before us. (And in the one major scene missing from the film he is, it is implied,

also a devil in his own right. Emilie's brothers-in-law come to the palace, after the abduction of the children, and play a game of verbal chess with the Bishop for Emilie's release. He checkmates them, however, by conjuring a false image of his supposedly smiling and contented wife.) Nevertheless, the Bishop is something of a straw man and lacks the power to conquer the wilful Alexander, who is a conjurer and storyteller in his own right. Furthermore his household is peopled with such a gallery of grotesque women that it is hard not to feel a small measure of sympathy for this weak and fastidious man. Harriet Andersson has a marvellous light-hearted cameo as the most duplicitous of ratlike servants. The old duel is refought with vigour but also with a certain amount of good-humour—as though it was at long last no longer the be all and end all of life as well as film-making.

Emilie is finally restored to the bosom of the Ekdahls and her return is crowned with the christening of her own daughter by Vergérus and that of Gustav Adolf by the lame nursemaid Maj. Throughout the film Bergman celebrates the Ekdahls' capacity for tolerance, and the fact that both these babies are wholeheartedly welcomed puts the seal on this celebration. Overcome with happiness at the birth of his new daughter, Gustav Adolf declares with tipsy sentimentality his faith in the happiness of the day whatever awfulness the future may hold. He echoes the feelings of his creator. One small question, however, intrudes: what is it that these strong, good-natured, understanding women, Gustav Adolf's wife and his mistress, see in this noisy old goat? Bergman's women have for years, one feels, been too good for their men.

Fanny and Alexander is not a perfect film. The character of the disappointed Carl is rather peremptorily written out of the plot. The film lacks the concentrated rigour of *From the Life of the Marionettes*. The exposition is occasionally confusing. Nevertheless, taken as a whole, it is a sustained triumph: the Ekdahls are a great pulsing family unit; one believes in the reality of Oscar's theatre company (and believes in it the more for the virtually silent presence of Gunnar Björnstrand as the stately *père noble*). For those who have kept faith with Bergman it is an inexpressible relief to find that despair has not gained the upper hand.

Bergman's ability to fix spots of time has not deserted him. Fanny and Alexander are waiting in the kitchen. Their father is dying. The old cook is writing a letter to a faithful correspondent at a mission station in China. Another old retainer talks about dogs. The children are playing a game. A treacle sandwich is produced. The cook, consolingly, offers Alexander the stamp to lick. He politely declines. The scene, the everyday persisting when death is at the door, is knitted together with calm assurance. Death in the end has no dominion. □



In the theatre.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Bergmania

INGMAR BERGMAN AND THE RITUALS OF ART

by Paisley Livingston

Cornell University Press/£15.00

INGMAR BERGMAN: A CRITICAL BIOGRAPHY

by Peter Cowie

Secker & Warburg/£12.50

To be a seminal cultural figure of the late 20th century, it helps if your name begins with 'B': Beckett, Brecht and Bergman have, between them, generated enough books to stock a small library. Beckett is the clear market leader, Brecht having made, in Anglo-Saxon terms, a tardy start. But Bergman has of late been putting in something of a spurt along the rails: the books by Livingston and Cowie are, respectively, numbers six and seven to be published since the beginning of the decade, bringing the running total to not far short of forty.

With Brecht, Bergman shares little more than a place in the alphabet and an occasional fondness for berets. But with Beckett, the comparison is a good deal less fanciful. Both have become masters at fixing the sense of cosmic alienation which pervades 20th century art, and both hint at without ever defining ways of transcending it. Both are constantly pulled between a silence which seems the proper response to the state of things, and an obsessively undeniable need to chart them with one final touch of despairing precision. Both (Beckett with greater rigour) have tended toward an ever more minimalist style, Beckett by reducing the stage space and mobility of his dramatic characters, Bergman by developing to snapping point his use of the relentless close-up.

If the above comparison seems rather protracted, it is prompted above all by Paisley Livingston's remarkable—if also irritating—study, *Ingmar Bergman and the Rituals of Art*. Not that Livingston actually mentions Beckett, though one feels this to be an oversight, since the range of his references extends to almost every other important figure in (predominantly French) 20th century culture, from Henri Bergson to Claude Lévi-Strauss. The method is both rewarding and confusing. Livingston's book is divided up into a number of thematic enquiries—'The Artist's Mask', 'The Comic Device', 'The Ritual', 'The Masks of Violence'—which range backwards and forwards across the years, comparing the handling of themes in different films. But each area of investigation tends to lead off into an

examination of the cultural and intellectual background, as though the territory needed to be thoroughly mapped before we could be allowed to set foot in it. Even the conclusion, in attempting to define the 'alternative' Bergman is suggesting to the bleak world he depicts, spends most of its time on a scholarly exegesis of *The Magic Flute*, contrasting the contributions of Mozart, Schikaneder and Bergman.

Livingston is, beyond the shadow of a doubt, an academic, but in an area of criticism which has tended of late (in the name of theoretical rigour) towards narrowness, his broad but by no means pluralistic approach is welcome, enriching rather than reducing the study of a director about whom one was almost certain there was nothing fresh to say. Of all major European—and, for that matter, world—directors, Bergman is the one whose work is most obviously that of an artist in the romantic sense, using the medium of cinema (and theatre) to express a personal world view. To set that view within its broader context and to argue for its consistency and richness, as Livingston does, is no small task and one which is executed with great stylistic clarity.

Peter Cowie's *Ingmar Bergman: A Critical Biography* could scarcely be more of a contrast. If a distinction can be made along such lines, Livingston's book is the more valuable while Cowie's is the more useful, since it is, remarkably, the first English-language biography of the director. Cowie makes it clear from the outset that he has no intention of digging around for dirt: 'From childhood on, Ingmar Bergman has been assailed by pressures and stimuli of uncommon strength; where these have affected his accomplishments as an artist, they have been described without inhibition. I leave the task of pursuing more dramatic and licentious revelations to my successors in the decades to come.' What this means is that Cowie takes Bergman very much on his own terms, with the vagaries of childhood, love life, marriages and sundry eroto-artistic relationships taken as the stuff that films are made of. The result, not surprisingly, is that one puts down Cowie's book with most of one's admiration (and, for that matter, reservations) intact, but no more able to like Bergman as a person than one suspected one would after watching the relentless marital traumas of the 1970s.

To quote two passages more or less at random: 'Bergman had guaranteed that there would be a minimum of ten performances for each of which Björnstrand would be paid ten crowns. Although the critics were generous, the public ignored the play, and after three

performances Bergman declared that he would shut up shop. Björnstrand was offered thirty crowns for his pains and was shocked. "I need to eat!" he protested. "Food!" cried Bergman. "Who in hell says you've a right to food. Live on coffee and cookies, like me!" And later: 'Bergman's second marriage had disintegrated, and his stage productions at Gothenburg suffered accordingly.'

Admittedly, these examples are taken from theatre work in the early years, but the pattern changes little, and how far one feels that such details enhance one's understanding of Bergman the creative artist depends very much on one's critical attitudes. Nevertheless, Cowie's book is clearly destined to become a standard work for its painstakingly thorough, detailed and generally perceptive working through of the director's stage and film career. He shows us a Bergman who is mellowed by age: "But now I prefer to leave film-making to younger people," he muses. "I need too much energy. Besides," he adds with a laugh, "it can never be more fun that it is right now!" Now there's a word one didn't expect to find associated with a Bergman movie. Lacking the ambitions (or, as some might have it, the pretensions) of Livingston, Peter Cowie provides a guide to a Bergman who is well within the range of normal understanding.

NICK RODDICK

Japanese manners

CURRENTS IN

JAPANESE CINEMA

by Tadao Sato, translated by Gregory Barrett

Kodansha International/£14.50

Q: What Japanese film-maker came under the influence of Universal's 'Bluebird Movies' (sentimental romances of rural life, exported to Japan around 1918), remained devoted to American cinema all his life, and created a body of work which fathered the soapy domestic dramas now enjoyed by Japanese housewives as their staple diet on TV? A: Ozu.

This is a simplification, of course, since the Japanese critic Tadao Sato is as aware as anybody of the uniqueness of Ozu. In fact he analyses the specifics of the Ozu style in much the same terms as any Western critic, though with invaluable additional perceptions dependent upon familiarity with Japanese manners and customs. A fascinating passage, for instance, which discusses Ozu compositions, in particular

his systematic preference for shots in which characters face in the same direction, in terms of the fact that 'it is considered both uncomfortable to look at length into someone's eyes during a conversation and cold not to do so at all.'

But the rather banal context into which Sato places Ozu, without ever underselling his genius, forcefully illustrates the point that most Western critics have to waste energy trying to penetrate the smokescreen of exoticism. To take only one simple example: much of the ink spilled in trying to define Mifune's extraordinary presence after the initial revelation of *Rashomon* might have been saved had the West been able to pigeonhole him as a *tateyaku*.

Borrowed from Kabuki along with its star performers in the early days of cinema, the *tateyaku* plays 'noble, idealised samurai, warriors who are not only victorious in fights but also sagacious men.' The predominantly merchant class Kabuki audience was highly satisfied with this ideal of manhood. But since the *tateyaku* prized the Bushido code of loyalty to his lord above love for his wife and family, the merchant wives were less contented, and for them a second lead was created, the *nimaine*: 'handsome, though not necessarily strong, pure in heart, though not necessarily clever... always kind and gentle towards the heroine, and when circumstances drove her to suicide, he gladly died with her.'

To demonstrate that the dichotomy has persisted, try naming a film in which Mifune played a love scene. Even more difficult, name a film in which Mifune played a love scene with ease and conviction. His characters varied, but even in *Seven Samurai*, where he may have been strong but could hardly be called sagacious, the love interest had to be supplied by the young disciple in the *nimaine* role. (The first real crossover of *tateyaku* and *nimaine* in Japanese cinema, according to Sato, was Nakadai's performance in Kobayashi's *The Human Condition*.)

In a useful preface, translator Gregory Barrett notes that the publication of Sato's first book in 1956 changed the course of film criticism in Japan, which had hitherto been divided between the ideologists, who would criticise a Mizoguchi film on the self-sacrifice of women for its feudalism, and the aesthetes who would praise the same film purely for its atmospheric effects. Sato tried to understand the film itself and place it in context, and he also began giving serious consideration to popular genres (like sword-fighting films) which had hitherto been ignored. As a firm believer in progress who takes a stern anti-feudalistic stance, Sato

BOOK REVIEWS

has—as Barrett also points out—‘an ambivalent attitude toward the traditional culture of Japan’ which distinguishes him from all Western critics.

Given that so little Japanese criticism has been translated, much of the foregoing has to be taken on trust, especially since the essays collected in *Currents in Japanese Cinema* form a corrective history where one is not always sure what is being corrected. And since it is fairly broadly based, covering many directors a good deal less familiar in the West than Mizoguchi, Kurosawa or Oshima, it also tends at times to read like a collection of plot synopses.

Even so, there can be no doubting the intelligence of Sato's writing, the usefulness with which he guides us through unknown or unfamiliar territory, and the difference of many of his assessments. Many of Kurosawa's best-known films, like *Rashomon*, *Seven Samurai* or *Throne of Blood*, are pushed to one side. Instead, Sato considers Kurosawa in terms of his early, more or less ‘national policy’ films made during World War Two, and his extraordinary proliferation of postwar heroes who are mentally or physically ill (*Drunken Angel*, *The Silent Duel*, *Scandal*, *The Idiot*, *Living*, *Record of a Living Being*, etc.): ‘In Kurosawa's ima-

gination, the strength of an individual takes on the analogy of one who is fighting against grave illness. This may be eccentric and sentimental, but it reflects a necessary process through which the Japanese can recover from the shock of defeat and become independent individuals.’

No respecter of persons or of tradition, Sato can still be extremely illuminating in these areas, as in the following description of the relationship between Mizoguchi's style and the old performing arts: ‘His characteristic “one scene equals one cut” technique, for example, is like the musical accompaniment in traditional dance, in Bunraku puppet theatre, in Noh, and in *naniwa bushi*, popular storytelling accompanied by the samisen. Unlike the dynamic, rhythmic movements of European dance and ballet, Japanese dance emphasises the beauty of shape, for the dancer momentarily holds a certain pose or gesture. These moments are called *kimaru* (“form resolution”), and in moving from one to the next, the body changes its balance in a smooth, flowing manner. Similarly, Mizoguchi's one scene, one cut technique is sequential motion; motion changing from one exquisite shape to another. Short cuts cannot possibly capture this subtle, relentless flow, which can only be caught by

complex camera movements like panning and craning. Thus, far from being static, Mizoguchi's long one cut is filled with visual restlessness, interspersed with interludes of breathless anticipation for, even as we watch, the structure of any single scene is always in the process of dynamic transformation.’

TOM MILNE

Racine of Dreams

JACQUES DEMY:
Les Racines du rêve
by Jean-Pierre Berthomé
L'Atalante, Nantes

‘Les Racines du rêve’—a phrase borrowed, as Jean-Pierre Berthomé acknowledges, from Michel Delahaye's brilliant essay on Demy in *Cahiers du Cinéma*—means of course, ‘The Roots of the Dream’, i.e. the multiple sources of his inspiration. But, doodling with my eyes, as it were, I found myself mentally converting it into ‘Le Racine du rêve’, or ‘The Racine of Dreams’. To anyone who has categorised Jacques Demy as a charming, minor decorator of a *cinéaste*, the medium's Dufy or Chagall, such a designation, I know, must appear pretentious, not to say baffling. And yet—as his latest and, I would suggest, most beautiful film, *Une Chambre en Ville* (A Room in Town), reveals—underneath its polka-dotted surface, his work can lay claim to both rigour and passion, a passion contained, as with Racine, by stringent formal principles (in Demy's case, ones of genre, music and *dialogues rythmés*; in Racine's, the Aristotelian unities and the classical alexandrine, a form burlesqued in *Les Demoiselles de Rochefort*). When it does surface, as in the extraordinary moment of *Une Chambre en Ville* when Michel Piccoli slits his throat in mid-song, the effect, at least for a motivated spectator, is heart-stopping. Like Racine too, alas, Demy does not travel well. Paradoxically, the lapidary terseness of his dialogue tends to get subsumed in the generalised terseness of the subtitling process. Anyway, how do you subtitle the twelve-syllable alexandrine?

Considering the relative indifference with which its subject is viewed outside France, it seems unlikely that this solid and densely argued monograph will prompt an English-language edition. Which is a great pity, for though Berthomé is on occasion a trifle solemn, even monotonous in the way he applies a uniform critical schema to each of the half-dozen shorts and eleven features, he has the virtue nevertheless of

fully assuming the implication of that borrowed title. With admirable lucidity he maps out the richness and consistency of Demy's thematics, and is particularly rewarding on the director's provincial origins (his obsession with the Passage Pommeraye in Nantes, already celebrated by the French Surrealists; his arrival in Paris; his idolatry of Ophüls, Vigo, Cocteau and, especially, Bresson's *Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne*, which was to become his ‘bedside movie’). No less meticulous is the manner in which he details Demy's fanatical attention to décor (to the point where, in *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg*, when Nino Castelnuovo and Catherine Deneuve meet in a café, his off-white pastis subtly harmonises with her amber apéritif), music (Berthomé pays a belated and not undeserved tribute to Michel Legrand) and lighting.

If Berthomé has a serious fault, it's one he shares with a number of French critics: quite simply, a reluctance to criticise. Though *Peau d'Ane* and *The Pied Piper* are surely, at best, half-successes, and *L'Événement le plus important depuis que l'homme a marché sur la lune* and *Lady Oscar* outright failures, his enthusiasm is evenly, therefore sometimes too thickly, spread. It was Demy himself who once confessed to me that, having had the ill-fortune to usher in his oeuvre with its own ideal summation, *Lola*, he ought maybe to have quit then and there. Yet the poignancy of even his least satisfactory movies derives precisely from his repeated endeavours, through them, to regain the Nantais Eden from which the unrepeatable perfection of *Lola* expelled him. Berthomé, a Nantais himself, can be recommended as a guide to that trajectory. (A nice bonus, too, that his book was published in Nantes by a company named ‘L'Atalante’.)

GILBERT ADAIR

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

CHARLES BARR teaches film at the University of East Anglia and is the author of *Ealing Studios* ... BILL BLAKEFIELD works at the National Audiovisual Center, a division of the National Archives, Washington ... ANNE HEAD is a journalist and PR representative in Paris ... LOUIS MARCORELLES is film critic for *Le Monde* ... BRIAN NORRIS is a consultant with Multi-Media Management, specialising in international legal and commercial aspects of production and distribution for the new media markets ... JIM SEALE is a freelance writer working in Hollywood ... ANTHONY SMITH is Director of the British Film Institute ... KEVIN TIERNEY is a Canadian university professor and film critic now on a teaching assignment in China.

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LETTERS

Movie and the Top Ten

DEAR MS HOUSTON,—I wish to respond to two unconnected matters in the Autumn 1982 issue of SIGHT AND SOUND in which I am personally involved.

1. The 'Top Ten'. May I correct an error in the published list that appears under my name—an error to which a last-minute change of mind may have contributed? My choice was *Heaven's Gate*, not *Days of Heaven*.

While on this subject, may I ask SIGHT AND SOUND to make explicit the criteria and procedures whereby critics were selected? Despite the editorial suggestion that the list is not to be taken too seriously as representing the Ten Best, it continues to carry weight with many people, and readers have a right to know not only who was chosen to determine it but who *wasn't*. The work of a great many of the critics represented seems to me, from any serious standpoint, negligible. On the other hand, a number of really important critics—those who have made significant contributions to the progress of theory and criticism—are conspicuously absent. I am thinking of (alphabetically and the list is not meant to be exhaustive) Dudley Andrew, Raymond Bellour, Janet Bergstrom, Andrew Britton, Noël Burch, Richard Dyer, Thomas Elsaesser, Stephen Heath, Colin MacCabe, Laura Mulvey, Bill Nichols, Victor Perkins, Douglas Pye, Michael Walker, Peter Wollen... May we know whether they were not invited or whether they refused to participate? If a substantial number of important critics decided to boycott the poll, your readers should be aware of this.

2. Gilbert Adair on *Movie*. I shall not concern myself with Adair's account of the original *Movie* of the 60s; he says nothing that wasn't said in SIGHT AND SOUND at the time, and says it no more intelligently. His description of the resurrected *Movie* of the late 70s (still flourishing, despite severe financial difficulties and the total lack of any full-time resident staff) as a 'handful of valedictory issues' that 'seem back numbers even as they are published' certainly needs to be challenged.

a. As a writer for *Movie* and a member of its editorial board I am of course not unprejudiced; I have to say, however, that *Movie* seems to me to have published, since its 1975 revival, some of the most stimulating and significant contemporary film criticism in the English language: I think especially of the work of Andrew Britton, Richard Dyer and Douglas Pye.

b. What is *not* a matter of opinion is that the critical position of *Movie* has fundamentally changed. Whether it was

ever unambiguously right-wing remains arguable; it is now quite unambiguously left-wing. A majority of its contributors are either committed Marxists or Marxist sympathisers; the magazine is characterised by a very clear and consistent political commitment to feminism and gay liberation (the latter, admittedly, a matter less of editorial policy than happy accident, a significant number of its contributors being gay activists: Britton, Dyer, Richard Lippe, myself). Since Adair's single memorable feat so far as a critic has been to interview Rivette on *Celine and Julie Go Boating* without at any point raising the issue of feminism, his blindness to this transformation is perhaps predictable. It has been the distinction of the new *Movie* to have assimilated this politicisation without sacrificing the tradition of 'close reading' that was its major contribution (though ignored by Adair) to film criticism in the 60s.

c. As to his remarks about myself, I shall content myself with a single elementary correction. Adair quotes me as saying in 1980 (obviously enough, I would have thought) that 'any criticism that fails to take into account... the major advances of the last twenty years foredooms itself to triviality...', and goes on to say that I seem to be alluding 'not to auteurism, but to structuralism.' Would he please tell us what structuralist film criticism he imagines to have been available in 1960? I was of course referring to *both*: that is, to the major developments in the evolution of film theory and criticism since the late 50s.

Finally, may I ask the editor why she continues to allow herself to be addressed as 'Sir' in the correspondence column, and request that my own letter be granted exemption from so blatantly sexist a practice?

Sincerely,

ROBIN WOOD

York University, Ontario.

Apologies to Robin Wood for the error on our part by which *Heaven's Gate* was transformed into *Days of Heaven*. As we explained in the Winter issue of SIGHT AND SOUND, letters were sent to approximately 200 critics, including some of those listed by Mr Wood, and answers were received from about 60 per cent.—EDITOR

Missing Hitchcocks

SIR,—Can it be that Almereida, so intent on perfecting his imitation of Addison de Witt, did not know about the missing Hitchcock films before last autumn? His facile and badly written piece in the Winter 1982/83 SIGHT AND SOUND hints that he expects all of us to be equally ignorant.

Alas, the truth is even more depressing. The five films have

been missing since 1969—all five were pulled at the last minute from the NFT's massive Hitchcock retrospective of that year (presumably the one Almereida thinks took place four years later), although *Vertigo*, at least, was around earlier in the year, as I saw it on Welsh ITV in spring or early summer. I recall that the TV company, to make room for a sporting programme, began its telecast earlier than advertised.

Almereida's sad anecdote about James Stewart failing to get a clip from the film for a retrospective is a trifle odd, as there was a clip shown at the American Film Institute's tribute to the actor in the spring of 1980, just as there had been one in the AFI's tribute to Hitchcock exactly a year earlier. (None of the other missing titles was excerpted in either programme.) Similarly, Paul Schrader, interviewed in *Film Comment* in 1976, remarked that he was in the habit of seeing the film every year. *Rope*, in turn, was included in the NFT's season of 'gay' films about five years ago. I don't know if it was actually shown or not, but surely a BFI publication like SIGHT AND SOUND can find out for us.

Many journalists before Almereida have written about the missing films, and the most commonly advanced reasons for their

disappearance are that *Rear Window* has been the subject of legal wranglings with the estate of the original author Cornell Woolrich, whilst the other four were being kept on ice by Hitchcock himself in the hope of a lucrative TV deal. No one before Almereida has put forward the crazy suggestion that *The Trouble with Harry* vanished because Hitchcock didn't like it much. In fact, it was well known to be one of his favourites in his own *oeuvre*. Well known to film lovers, that is. Not the likes of Almereida.

Yours faithfully,
PETER RICHARDS
Bridgend

SIR,—I find it most annoying that, with the Winter 1982/83 edition, SIGHT AND SOUND has not only published a sensationalistic article, but has neglected to check the facts in doing so. I refer to Almereida's short piece on Hitchcock, in which he attempts to suggest that a whole slab of the director's greatest work has not been shown anywhere in the world for the last nine years. How come then that, out of the 53 full-length films Hitchcock directed, I have only failed to see three (discounting *The Mountain Eagle*, which literally no longer exists as far as anyone knows) in the past seven years?

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LETTERS

The three I have so far searched for in vain are *The Paradine Case*, *Rope* and *The Trouble with Harry*. To which far flung corners of the globe have I ventured in order to catch *Rear Window*, the 1956 *The Man Who Knew Too Much* and *Vertigo* (twice)? Well London, actually, in the packed auditoria of two of the city's best known repertory cinemas (and *Vertigo* has also played from time to time at the Paris Cinémathèque within the last ten years). Furthermore, vaguely to note that the earlier *The Man Who Knew Too Much* 'was available in the 70s' is conveniently to play down the fact that it has been screened several times within the last four years by both the Scala and the NFT, while there is almost certainly more than merely a sale of rights involved in the disappearance of *Rope*. It has been claimed that any existing prints of this film are now in such a poor condition that they could not be shown again without some form of overhaul.

Finally, may I assure Almereida (and anyone else) that it is well worth taking the trouble to seek out *Vertigo*. The secret is to scan the London listings magazines with a fine tooth comb.

Yours faithfully,
RICHARD HAYSOM
London SW12

The Trouble with...

Rope, *Rear Window*, *The Trouble with Harry*, *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1956) and *Vertigo* are legally unavailable worldwide, in any format, for cinema or television. Recent public screenings have, therefore, been illicit. The only probable exceptions have been the clips used in the AFI's tributes and, presumably, the screenings of *Rear Window* and *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1956) by the Cinémathèque Française at Cannes in May 1980. Copyright is held by the Hitchcock estate, though it is suspected that further problems may arise over the story rights to *Vertigo* (not, as Almereida had it, *Rear Window*).

Rope has not, as Almereida wrote, been unavailable for nine years: it showed at the NFT in 1977. *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1934) is still available and regularly shown in many territories. It was *Vertigo*, not *Rear Window*, that was illicitly shown by an independent exhibitor at the 1982 Berlin festival. (It was shown in a black and white print dubbed into German.) Contrary to Mr Richards' assertion, *Rope*, *The Trouble with Harry* and *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1956) were included in the NFT's 1969 Hitchcock season. *Vertigo* was still under licence to ITV in 1969

and was often transmitted in a magenta print: colour transmissions on ITV did not in fact begin until 16 November 1969. James Stewart failed to get a clip from *Vertigo* for the retrospective at the 1982 Berlin festival.—EDITOR

The British Council and Film Festivals

SIR,—The article on page five of your Winter 1982/83 issue gave welcome publicity to the British Council's initiatives. It has been announced recently that Lord Brabourne will be Chairman of the new Films Television and Video Advisory Committee, and the names of those who have accepted invitations to become members should be available soon.

Mari Kuttina rightly drew attention to the vagueness of the Council's seven-point proposals. An Advisory Committee is needed precisely because the field is so much wider than the attention hitherto afforded to it by the Council, and this development should be seen as a natural progression in a process which can be traced back from the National Panel for Film Festivals (whose first Chairman was Professor, now Lord, Asa Briggs) to the Standing Festivals Committee of the Association of Specialised Film

Producers of the early 1950s.

Continuity of policy and understanding of earlier work will be assured by the presence of six former members of the NFFF on the new FTVAC. So far from speaking of dissolution, it would be more accurate to speak of evolution or transformation into a much more broadly based body (as instigated by the NFFF itself several years ago), and to look forward to the development of integrated forms. The festivals lobby need have no fear of the work being elbowed out, but there will be advantage in placing festivals in context with all other promotional work.

Yours faithfully,
BRUCE NIGHTINGALE
Director, Films Department
British Council
JAMES QUINN
Chairman, NFFF, (1974-83)

Tati

SIR,—Having been commissioned by Secker and Warburg to write the life of Jacques Tati, I would be grateful indeed to hear from any of your readers who may happen to have personal recollections of the man himself, his family, his friends or his colleagues.

Yours faithfully,
JAMES HARDING
100 Ridgmount Gardens
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●IDENTIFICATION OF A WOMAN

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Antonioni back on native ground—and back in many ways with the themes, images, and unerring eye for abstracting a contemporary scene that distinguished his early films. He might most readily be identified, of course, in the character of his film director hero (Tomas Milian), who returns to Rome at the beginning and thereafter is continually boobytrapped by his sense that he is out of touch with both time and place. He is also out of touch with his own impulses as a film-maker: he wants vaguely to make a film about the 'ideal woman', but the project refuses to come together round the assorted faces he has pinned on a noticeboard. Even more elusive are the real women who flit into view: one (Daniela Silverio) he cannot pin down, the other (Christine Boisson) he cannot see clearly. Through this, Antonioni delightfully reaffirms that his vision of the modern world—the play of surfaces and textures, of places and spaces—needn't be a symptom of creeping anomie, but of a draughtsman elegantly fulfilling his contract. (Marcel Bozzuffi.)

●Q—THE WINGED SERPENT

(ITC)

Larry Cohen, getting better all the time, terrorises New York with his customary vigour. His 'monster' is now the resurrected Aztec god Quetzalcoatl, nesting in a skyscraper and plucking victims from the Manhattan rooftops, while a deranged High Priest combs the city below for sacrifices prepared to be skinned alive. Puzzled cop David Carradine, with slightly routine scepticism, tries to make sense of the carnage. Special effects are weak, but Cohen disposes camera and cast with such panache that it scarcely matters; what masquerades as a horror movie in the *Kong* tradition turns out to be a fascinatingly fresh exercise in paranoia with echoes of *The Private Files of J. Edgar Hoover*. Michael Moriarty dominates in a superbly seedy performance as the small-time crook who discovers the serpent's nest and seizes the opportunity to hold the city to ransom. (Candy Clark, Richard Roundtree.)

●SOPHIE'S CHOICE

(UIP)

After the boldly innovative and much underrated *Rolover*, a return to the mainstream womb for Alan Pakula in adapting one of those novels every American writer seems to have to get out of his system (this one by William Styron), relating how 'I' came to the big city, green at the gills but

determined to learn about life and become a great writer. Life in this case means Meryl Streep, tremulously sensitive as a mittel-European woman of mystery, juggling a passionately seesaw affair with a mentally unbalanced charmer (an uneasy couple with whom 'I' develops a *Jules and Jim*-ish intimacy) while trailing a hideous concentration-camp past. All put together with loving care, fine performances, and attention to the last detail of period or of Streep's Polish accent. Not boring, despite the length, simply unilluminating. By the end, only one question looms: why on earth did Pakula want to make this movie? (Kevin Kline, Peter MacNicol.)

●THE VERDICT

(Fox)

A courtroom setting, a crisis of conscience, much rhetoric about the instinct as opposed to the institution of justice, and a deus (or dea) ex machina to fit it all neatly into place. *The Verdict* might easily be seen as Sidney Lumet's belated follow-up to *Twelve Angry Men*, even to the extent that so contemporary a writer as David Mamet has imitated the sleeve-tugging style of such 50s TV writers as Paddy Chayefsky and Reginald Rose. But *The Verdict* also manages to absorb and move on from these old-fashioned elements: the location shooting in a wintry Boston has an elliptical realism that dovetails with religious symbolism, and there are some pirouettes of personality worthy of *Prince of the City*—even if Charlotte Rampling pirouettes all on her own as left-over love interest. (Paul Newman, Jack Warden, James Mason.)

●VERONIKA VOSS

(Miracle)

Rainer Werner Fassbinder's penultimate film is a triumph: a catalogue of two or three things (and more) that we already knew about the Bavarian Douglas Sirk and an exercise in stylistic bravura that now, unfortunately, has nowhere to go. To begin with, Sirk has more or less been subsumed in the more sardonic—probably more Germanic—melodrama of Billy Wilder. The plot spans both *Sunset Boulevard* and *Fedora*: Veronika Voss, a UFA star of the 40s, dreams of a comeback in the reconstructed Germany of the mid-50s, and co-opts an impressionable sportswriter to her cause. She is, however, in the grip of a sinister 'neurologist', a woman who uses morphine as a currency more lucrative (and all-consuming) than gold, and who belongs to the *echt* Germanic paranoia of Fritz Lang. More than a history of his country's cinema, however, Fassbinder turns *Veronika Voss* into a dazzling parable of all cinema, of the penalties of living out others' fantasies. (Rosel Zech, Hilmar Thate, Annemarie Düringer.)

AIRPLANE II—THE SEQUEL

(UIP)

More like *The Remake*, really. A good few gags from *Airplane!* are resuscitated in a space-flight setting, with some maladroit timing serving to underscore the sense of *déjà vu*. (Robert Hays, Julie Hagerty, Lloyd Bridges; director, Ken Finkelman.)

THE AMATEUR

(Fox)

John Savage as maverick CIA man bent on revenge in Czechoslovakia is at the centre of an ill-constructed and largely implausible spy yarn with occasional atmospheric touches. (Christopher Plummer, Marthe Keller; director, Charles Jarrott.)

CARNY

(ITC)

Jodie Foster pals up with the 'bozo', Garey Bussey, in a dump-the-gorilla-in-the-water carnival sideshow. By the end of this once-shelved tribute to carnival folk, she is herself a full-fledged 'carny'. Sometimes sentimental, sometimes hard-edged, always affectionate. (Robbie Robertson; director, Robert Kaylor.)

THE DARK CRYSTAL

(UIP)

Muppeteers Frank Oz and Jim Henson have created a diverse menagerie of weird and lovable creatures which scuttle, stride, flap and waddle with the greatest of ease. The trouble is that they are deployed in a fantastical quest littered with too much mumbo-jumbo.

THE EXECUTIONER'S SONG

(Virgin)

Not so much a movie as a career: having commissioned Norman Mailer to write the story of Gary Gilmore, the Utah killer who created a furore by insisting on his right to execution, journalist-investigator Lawrence Schiller now turns producer-director of Mailer's script based on his massive *oeuvre*. The result—cut down from a four-hour television version—is more an adjunct to the book (well-mounted; faithful to the 'facts') than a film in its own right. (Tommy Lee Jones, Eli Wallach, Christine Lahti.)

FIRST BLOOD

(Columbia-EMI-Warner)

Small-town sheriff bites off more than he expects when he tries to run an undesirable longhair (who happens to be a Vietnam vet) out of town. Based on a brilliant thriller by David Morrell which has had all its provocative angles smoothed away to provide a routine blood-and-guts vehicle for Sylvester Stallone. (Brian Dennehy, Richard Crenna; director, Ted Kotcheff.)

48 HRS

(UIP)

Walter Hill falls upon this violent and at times too relentlessly smart beat-the-clock-to-find-the-malefactor yarn with relish. Nick Nolte is the hero with a concussed manner, Eddie Murphy his lithe if reluctant black partner. Misogyny is let off the leash and the outcome is visible from a distance. (Annette O'Toole.)

FRANCES

(Columbia-EMI-Warner)

Lumbering, mawkish biopic of jinxed 30s starlet Frances Farmer: about the only welcome aspect is the absence of impersonations of such one-time Hollywood colleagues as Cary Grant and Howard Hawks. (Jessica Lange, Sam Shepard, Kim Stanley; director, Graeme Clifford.)

THE MISSIONARY

(HandMade)

Writer, star and co-producer

Michael Palin temporarily abandons Monty Python madness in favour of gently satirical character comedy. The adventures of Palin's innocent Edwardian missionary are stretched too thin, but Peter Hannan's luscious photography lends extraordinary visual appeal. (Maggie Smith, Denholm Elliott; director, Richard Loncraine.)

MONSIGNOR

(Fox)

Starts fairly promisingly as a witty muckraker about Vatican finances, with World War II blackmarket deals escalating into full-fledged Mafia operations. Takes a nosedive when the superman priest-financier (Christopher Reeve) falls for a novice nun, and is then irrevocably grounded in a hash of breastbeating and pious platitudes. (Genevieve Bujold, Fernando Rey; director, Frank Perry.)

PRIVATES ON PARADE

(HandMade)

Conscripted privates help to run down the Union Jack in postwar Singapore with infectious exuberance: Denis Quilley and Joe Melia repeat their respectively bravura and scatological roles from the RSC's production of Peter Nichols' hit play, and Michael Blakemore again directs with self-effacing accomplishment. (Nicola Pagetti.)

THE STING II

(UIP)

Sequel (minus the canny original stars) to that elaborate con of 1973, with the victim belatedly bent on revenge (period updated ten years but Scott Joplin still on tap). Predictably he gets taken again, in a plot so busily convoluted that the characters die of neglect. Competently made but fiendishly boring. (Jackie Gleason, Karl Malden, Oliver Reed; director, Jeremy Paul Kagan.)

SUMMER LOVERS

(Rank)

Two young Americans sojourning on a Greek holiday isle widen their horizons, after a fashion, in a *ménage à trois* with an enigmatic Frenchwoman. Smoothly turned out by Randal Kleiser but mainly simple-minded. (Peter Gallagher, Daryl Hannah, Valerie Quennessen.)

TALES OF ORDINARY MADNESS

(Miracle)

A work of cultural transposition, in which Marco Ferreri takes on the raddled, Hemingwayesque attitudinising of Charles Bukowski, in the process striking a few attitudes (mainly to do with self-expression and sexual disgust) of his own. By turns, repellent, naive and risible. (Ben Gazzara, Ornella Muti, Susan Tyrrell.)

TEMPEST

(Columbia-EMI-Warner)

Paul Mazursky abandons nervous New York humour for a sojourn in the Greek islands, indulging in not tourist relaxation but a strangely charming recreation of Shakespeare's *Tempest*. John Cassavetes, a disillusioned architect, is a believably grumpy, unyielding Prospero, and Susan Sarandon and Molly Ringwald effective New Woman versions of Ariel and Miranda. (Gena Rowlands.)

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